



Friends of the Metolius

Protecting the Metolius Basin since 1990

Late Spring, Early Summer Newsletter, June 2022
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President's Corner

Spring has come and gone and summer has arrived in the Metolius Basin. Spring gave us warm and sunny weather, snow, rain and wind, then sunny all over again. I particularly welcome the heavy spring rains and the late snowfalls in the higher elevations because what happens in winter and spring has a direct effect on how the basin is set up for the dry summer months that follow. Spring rains green the forests and help maintain higher moisture levels in fuels, and a healthy snowpack helps maintain groundwater levels.

The *Friends* board of directors has welcomed the opportunity in the past few months to have in-person meetings. Zoom has been an invaluable tool over the past few years, but we are all weary of virtual meetings. In-person meetings are more collegial and productive, and in the case of our board, allow us to efficiently plan the projects that we are working on this year.

The Forest Service manages most of the lands in the Metolius Basin. Necessarily, many of our projects are done in partnership with the Forest Service. We work hard to maintain a productive and collaborative working relationship with the Forest Service because our core goal is the same: maintaining the ecological health of the Metolius Basin. On occasion, we disagree on the best approach to solving problems that stand in the way of achieving our goals, but we always seem to find a way to sort out any disagreements by focusing on sound, science-based solutions. We are always impressed with the hard work and dedication of the Forest Service staff in working together to get problems solved.

Spring is when we kick off many of our annual projects. For example, every spring our teams of Adopt-a-Trail volunteers are out on the trails doing maintenance work and

quality sampling and analysis. We have performed comprehensive water quality analysis for over 30 years – you can find all of the data in a searchable database on our website at www.metoliusfriends.org. Will be relying on our historical data as part of a long-term initiative to protect the quality of water in the Metolius for generations far into the future. Specifically, by the time you are reading this newsletter *Friends* will have filed a petition with the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission asking the commissioners to designate the Metolius River as a “Outstanding Resource Water” of the State of Oregon. This is a major project that we have been working on for over two years and we are filing the petition jointly with the Northwest Environmental Defense Center. “ORWs” are high quality waters that have extraordinary character or ecological values. Once designated as an ORW, the Oregon DEQ is tasked with maintaining the high water quality. This will be a form of protection will help insure that the Metolius runs clean and cold for future generations. See page 5 for details.

This year we have another restoration project – the Suttle Lake Community Kitchen. There is more on this project in this newsletter.

We have a busy work season ahead; all of it done by enthusiastic volunteers. If you ever feel like rolling up your sleeves and helping out, get in touch by email to friendsofthemetolius@gmail.com. Because we rely on your donations to fund most of the work we do, please support us with either a donation online at www.metoliusfriends.org or by sending a check to Friends of the Metolius, P.O. Box101, Camp Sherman, Oregon 97730.



July 2, 9:00 – 11:00 am

Camp Sherman Bridge to Allingham Bridge and back. Learn about the unique riparian habitat of the Metolius ecosystem, explore early Camp Sherman history, and observe changes to the river to enhance fish habitat. Meet near the Camp Sherman Bridge fish viewing platform at 9:00 am. Leader: Scott Blau. For information, call 503.730.8034 or 541.595.6439.

July 9, 8:30 – 10:30 am

Bird and Flower Walk Along the Metolius. Join Oregon Master Naturalist Carol Wall to look and listen for the rich bird and flower life on the Metolius. Watch for woodpeckers, songbirds, dippers, and mergansers, while exploring the ways in which they live in this riverside habitat. Meet at the Camp Sherman Bridge fish viewing platform at 8:30 am. Leader: Carol Wall. For information, call 541.549.0362.

July 16, 9:00 – 11:00 am

Plant I.D. Walk Along the Metolius. Amateur botanist David Miller will share his knowledge and love of the many beautiful plants that live in this pristine and diverse habitat. Learn to identify plants that perhaps you've wondered about. Approximate distance is 2 miles. Meet near the Camp Sherman Bridge fish viewing platform. Leader: David Miller. For information, call David at 541.550.1441.

July 23, 9:00 – 11:00 am

Camp Sherman Bridge to Allingham Bridge & back. See description above for July 2. Leader Susan Prince's cabin on the river has been in her family since the 1930's. Meet near the Camp Sherman Bridge fish viewing platform. Leader: Susan Prince. For information, call 415.233.3243.

July 30, 8:30 – 10:30 am

Bird and Flower Walk Along the Metolius. See description for July 9.

August 6, 9:00 – 11:00 am

Camp Sherman to Allingham Bridge and back. See description for July 23.

August 13, 9:00 – 11:00 am

Plant I.D. Walk along the Metolius. See description for July 16

August 20, 9:00 – 11:00 am

Camp Sherman Bridge to Riverside Campground and back. Explore the upper river from the Camp Sherman Bridge to the site of the 1930's Civilian Conservation Corps camp at the Riverside Campground while learning about the natural and human history of the Camp Sherman area. Meet near the Camp Sherman Bridge fish viewing platform. Leader: Scott Blau. For information, call 541.595.6439, 503.730.8034.

August 27, 9:00 – 11:00 am

Camp Sherman Bridge to Allingham Bridge and back See description for July 23.

September 4, 9:00 – 11:00 am

Camp Sherman Bridge to Allingham Bridge and back

See description for July 2

Adopt-a-Trail Crew Still Whacking Away. It's Fun. Would You Like to Try It?

There's probably no place that doesn't participate in the national Adopt-a-Highway program to reduce roadside litter. But adopt your own forest trail along a wild and scenic Northwest river? It's actually possible through a *Friends* volunteer program carried out in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service that dates back almost 15 years. The Adopt-a-Trail program's purpose is to protect trail users from hazards such as tripping along the network of riverside and forest trails in the Metolius Basin. (And also to sometimes protect the trails themselves from those same users.)

Friends' trail volunteer crew currently consists of 25 individuals with roots in the community. Usually working in pairs, they each take responsibility for a segment of the 27-some miles in the network. This essentially includes both sides of the Metolius beginning near the headwaters all the way downstream to Candle Creek, except for those parts which are private. It also includes a significant portion of the trail leading to the top of Black Butte as well as the Lake Creek Trail leading from Camp Sherman to Suttle Lake.

Trail adopters are asked to work their trails at least twice during the dry months, once as the trail becomes walkable and again in the fall.

Volunteers use hand tools like limb loppers, clippers and brush saws to cut back vegetation so that hikers don't have to push through sometimes tick-heavy bushes. Adopters also pick up litter, check and correct for erosion (especially around the streamside restoration sites established in cooperation with Trout Unlimited a few years ago), and remove the limbs, rocks and debris that accumulate after storms. In short, that trail is their baby.

"But wait," you say, "It would take a lot more than a set of loppers to deal with some of the trees that come down on the trails here." That's where the Forest Service comes in. After adopters complete their bi-annual survey and trail clean-up, they make note of anything too big to handle so the Forest Service can send someone in to deal with it.

Anyone interested in becoming an Adopt-a-Trail volunteer should make their interest known to Don Wilt, Adopt-a-Trail program coordinator, at dwwilt@gmail.com, or call 541-595-6749.

Suttle Lake Community Kitchen Restoration Project

Friends is collaborating with the Sisters Ranger District to restore the historic Community Kitchen at Suttle Lake. The Community Kitchen shelter was originally constructed in 1936 by the Civilian Conservation Corps and is in serious disrepair. The Suttle Lake Community Kitchen Restoration Project will include replacement of the steel inserts for the cook stoves, repointing of the masonry work, replacement of the water fountain structures, repair or replacement of rotted,

and treatment of logs showing minor rot and possible replacement of the two counters and sink that have been



removed. Reconstruction of the roof will also take place and include the replacement of the peak cap log, replacement of purlins, removal of the plywood, reshingling with cedar shakes, and reflashing the chimney. To mitigate further rotting of sill logs and the roof, dirt and vegetation will be cleared away from the shelter and trees overhanging the shelter limbed up. A copy of the original plans for the shelter will guide the effort. A grant has been received from the Roundhouse Foundation to assist with this effort. Work will begin in September. If you're interested in volunteering for this project, please send an email with your contact information to friendsofthemetolius@gmail.com.

Collaboration between the Friends and the U.S. Forest Service

Friends of the Metolius was formed in 1990 to stop the Little Buck timber sale. This was a clearcut sale in the Metolius Basin. In response to the challenge posed by *Friends*, the Sisters District Ranger eventually pulled the sale. Furthermore, the Forest Service stopped planning timber sales in the Metolius Basin.

By the mid-1990's, *Friends* members were viewing with considerable alarm the deteriorating condition of the forest around Camp Sherman, as manifested by increasing numbers of trees killed by Spruce budworm, Mountain pine beetle, and mistletoe. An overly dense forest was especially hard on larch. This was due, in part, to almost 100 years of fire suppression. The forest was becoming extremely susceptible to catastrophic wildfire. In 1997, *Friends* started developing a project to improve forest health and reduce hazardous fire conditions.

At the same time, the Forest Service was becoming increasingly motivated to do something to mitigate increasingly extreme fire danger, especially in areas where people lived and worked. These common interests led the *Friends* and the USFS to cooperate and share the costs of implementing the Heritage Forest Demonstration project from 2001-2003. Heritage Demo plots showed the impacts on the landscape of thinning, mowing, pruning mistletoe infected branches, and prescribed fire. *Friends* and the USFS were working together to accomplish common goals!

In 2003, the B & B fire roared through the forest around Camp Sherman. Camp Sherman was evacuated twice. This really awakened residents to the need to do something to reduce fire hazard.

Since 2003, the USFS has been actively thinning small trees, mowing, and conducting prescribed burns to improve forest health and reduce fire hazard. The B & B fire galvanized awareness of the need for treatments. As the effects of climate change increase the risks associated with high-intensity wild fires, those who love the Metolius, and especially those who live in Camp Sherman are keenly aware of the need for much more work to be done.

Friends continues to work the Forest Service on a number of projects, including abatement of invasive weeds, restoration of CCC shelters at campgrounds and now the Community Kitchen at Suttle Lake, restoration of the historic Black Butte Cupola lookout, a dispersed camping inventory in the Wild and Scenic River corridor, and a second round of treatments to the Heritage Demo including a new uneven-aged management plot.

The collaborative relationship between *Friends* and the Forest Service benefits both parties and, most importantly, the Metolius Basin. However, *Friends* continues to have a watchdog role in the Metolius Basin. If we see something threatening to the Metolius environment, we'll let the Forest Service or other responsible party know and will work with them to resolve the issue.

***Friends* Volunteers Outfitted for Safety**

Folks who volunteer their time doing one of the several environmental activities sponsored by *Friends* will be sporting a fresh new look this year. You'll recognize them in their bright yellow and green shirts clearly identifying them as members of the "Volunteer Crew." This includes activities like the Weed Warriors and the Adopt-a-Trail volunteers.



A new *Friends* shirt, hard at work at the Black Butte Cupola

At present, these activities involve about 50 individuals on a regular basis. The main reason for outfitting the volunteers was safety. The bright colors will help keep them from being mistaken for an animal in the brush or from having a run-in with someone who might be suspicious of their activities when they see them cutting back tick-brush on a forest trail or pulling yellow flag iris out of the river. The new shirts bear the *Friends* logo on both sides with the words "Volunteer Crew" prominently displayed across the back.

If you're a current volunteer and haven't received your shirt, get in touch and we will get your shirt to you. If you are considering exploring opportunities to become a volunteer, let us know and we'll see if we can connect you with jobs that you will find rewarding. And of course, you'd get a nice new volunteer shirt!

Invasive Weeds

Compared to other basins in Central Oregon, the Metolius is in good condition as regards invasive plant species. In part, this is due to the collaborative efforts of the *Friends*-sponsored Camp Sherman Weed Warriors, sponsored by *Friends*, the US Forest Service, and the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Invasive knapweeds are found along some Camp Sherman roads and at scattered sites on both public and private lands. The Weed Warriors hand remove these and a few other species, plus we pickup roadside litter. This 22-year-old effort is paying off: some populations have been eradicated and many have been reduced but it is an ongoing battle. Please join in our weekly forays starting in May and ending in September.

Ribbon grass, yellow iris and reed canary grass have been targeted along the Metolius River for several years, and are largely controlled. The Forest Service, with Oregon Department of Agriculture assistance, will once again spray remnant populations in late September. This has been a successful project with wonderful cooperation from riverside cabin owners. *Friends* contributes to this effort with public outreach and by testing for herbicide in the water. This summer, *Friends* will install a boot cleaning station at the fish hatchery. This will allow hikers to remove debris which may harbor invasive weed seeds from shoes. The station will also include information about the spread of noxious plants.'



Yellow Flag Iris. Beautiful but invasive!

We are a small group who try to have fun while we pull weeds. Contact Pete Schay at mp.schay@gmail.com or 541-588-0649, or Rosemary Leonnig at rh11977@msn.com or 541-595-1950 if you'd like to help.

The Metolius River, an "Outstanding Resource Water"

As noted earlier in this Newsletter, *Friends* have filed a petition with the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission asking the commission to initiate a rule-making process to designate the Metolius River, from its headwaters to the confluence with Lake Billy Chinook, as an "Outstanding Resource Water", and to adopt policies consistent with the designation. The ORW designation will help protect the pristine water quality of the river, thereby protecting the fisheries (including endangered bull trout), and complementing current management goals, recreational enjoyment and the economies associated with recreation. There are currently three ORWs in Oregon, the north fork Smith River, Waldo Lake and Crater Lake. The Metolius belongs on that short list!

Under the ORW designation, the U.S. Forest Service and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs will continue to manage the river and surrounding lands to protect existing water quality and ecological values, in accordance with their authorities. DEQ will not issue permits for discharges to the river, although short-term impacts may be allowed to respond to emergencies or for long term restoration or water quality improvements

ORW designations are reserved for the most pristine waters of the US and are part of the Clean Water's Act's antidegradation policy. The Metolius River is a federally designated Wild and Scenic River and an Oregon Scenic Waterway. An ORW designation focuses on protecting water quality, strengthens existing protections and is completely complementary to the Wild and Scenic River designation because it has a different reach than the existing protections. While the Wild and Scenic River Act includes outstanding water quality as an ORV, the ORW has only one purpose and that is to prevent degradation of the water quality established at the time the designation is made. In a complimentary but contrasting manner, the ORW adds a policy under the antidegradation policies of the Clean Water Act that specifies that the existing water quality shall not be degraded.

For *Friends* it is about protecting the river long into the future. We don't know what will happen next year, or in the next 50 years. We believe that no amount of protection is too much; there are so many creative ways to diminish a valued resource. An ORW designation would not impose any new administrative requirements on land managers (i.e., the Forest Service) or private landowners; it simply is a tool that could be used to further the goal of protecting the resource long after we are gone.