



2021 Annual Report

Message from the Executive Director



Executive Director, Joe Moll,
at Finn Rock Reach

At different times on different projects, the four organizing principles of our work, Protect-Connect-Restore-Sustain, are more or less apparent. Newly acquired land is considered Protection. Gathering with people on the land reflects Connection. Our hands in the dirt, moving it around or seeding it with fire, water and plant life is an attempt at Restoration. And keeping the whole operation moving forward over time is our responsibility to Sustain. We structure many of our communications, including this

annual report around those actions, though the distinctions can easily blur in synergies. However, one additional term burns with increased intensity in our work these days, a simple word at the heart of our mission: care. Following two years of pandemic, devastating wildfires, and wild swings in weather events, the need to practice great care, for the land and for each other, is now always front of mind. Thank you for both inspiring and making that practice possible with your support. I hope your impact is evident and reassuring in the stories that follow.

Winter Water Ouzel

By Bob Bumstead

Consider this ouzel
mining Horse Creek
for insects
that cling to the cobble.
As he dips his head into the flow
a tiny wavelet of water
rides over his head
breaking just behind his neck.
I sit five feet from him
on a sunny rock
basking
on this January day
and watch his slate form
dip-dance in the near freezing
shallows
then pause on a mossy rock,
content in
the sun
glinting off his
yellow eye
as he sings fragments
of his spring
song



Land Protection Today, with a Long Tomorrow in Mind



ELIZABETH GOWARD

A volunteer helps to replant floodplain forest along the McKenzie River just outside of Blue River, Oregon.

While still limited by Covid-19, our land protection work in 2021 set the stage for the years ahead. This deliberate work occurred in three general areas: the upper McKenzie River, the urban fringe of Eugene and Springfield, and the central Oregon coast.

Following the Holiday Farm Fire, we acquired 5 parcels of land right on the river, adjacent and just downstream from our Finn Rock Reach project.

Staff continued work with landowners to build on the conservation anchors of the South Fork McKenzie River and Finn Rock Reach. These lands provide the base for an ambitious decade-long floodplain restoration program with partners at the US Forest Service, McKenzie Watershed Council and Eugene Water and Electric Board. Additionally, the Trust received a 16-acre land donation in Blue River, offered by the three sisters who held the Seneca Family of Companies. MRT will serve as the interim holder of the land, while a community driven vision and planning process maps out long term ownership and use.

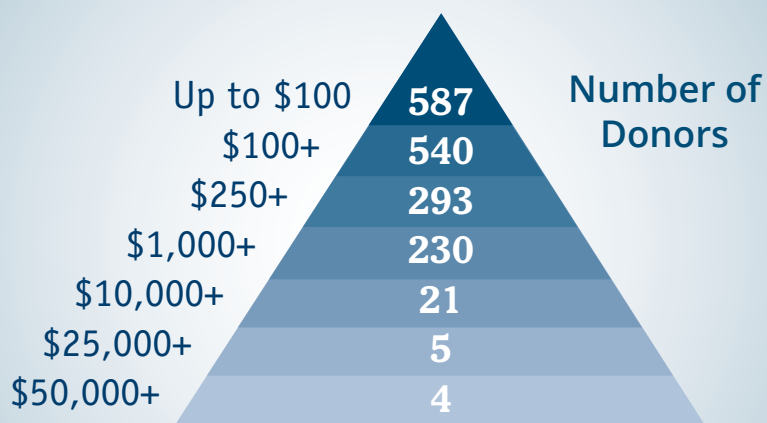
Closer to the Eugene-Springfield urban core, two projects linked to the Rivers to Ridges community vision moved toward completion. In 2021 we signed an agreement and secured funding to acquire an oak woodland near the Spencer Butte Ridgeline, and expect to complete that acquisition this fall. In November we also entered into a formal agreement with The Nature Conservancy for the transfer of the 1,360-acre Willamette Confluence Preserve, near the confluence of the Coast and Middle Forks of the

Willamette River. These lands near the metropolitan area will provide new opportunities for community members to participate in natural lands stewardship close to home.

Finally, in July of 2021, the Trust hired Margaret Treadwell, our first central coast-based program manager. We have been welcomed to the area with immediate land protection opportunities, from coastal headlands to estuarine wetlands and tributary stream properties. We continue to partner with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, to work together on land protection projects that secure important ecological and cultural resources and Indigenous access to such sites.

From our namesake headwaters to the Coast Range to lands in our urban backyards, we continue to discover cherished lands, and the people who care for them. Well beyond just the acres of land and miles of stream protected, these projects stitch together a land base that our grandchildren's children will treasure in ways we can only imagine today.

COMMUNITY GIVING



VOLUNTEERING BY THE NUMBERS



750
Volunteers



3000+
Hours



5000+
Trees & Shrubs
Planted

Deepening our Land to Sea Connections



RICK MCINTOSH, USFWS

Endangered Marbled Murrelets rely on the land to sea connection, where Pacific Northwest Old Growth Forests meet the Pacific Ocean.

The Pacific Ocean pummels the Oregon coast with some of the strongest ocean energy on the planet. There it meets a windswept environment of alternating sandy beaches and rocky shores, with the largest expanse of coastal sand dunes in North America thrown in for good measure. Our wild and diverse coast is a rare and special place, dear to many if not all Oregonians. Conserving and restoring its many habitats is well worth our efforts – for climate resilience, fish and wildlife conservation, and watershed protection.

It's also relatively sparsely populated, which makes conservation efforts more challenging due to limited community resources. MRT has been serving the

Central Coast between Reedsport and Yachats since 2007, with conservation easements on Tenmile Creek, acquisitions in the Siuslaw Estuary, and partnering with the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians in acquiring a property on Tahkenitch Lake south of Florence. In 2019, we committed to fill the void left by the closure of the Central Coast Land Conservancy by stretching our service area up to Lincoln City.

To increase staff capacity and integrate more fully into coastal communities, MRT brought on Sam Hillmann as our Coastal Conservation Associate AmeriCorps member in 2020-21, and then hired our first Coastal Conservation Program Manager, Margaret Treadwell, in July 2021 just as Sam's term of service was ending. Margaret spent her first 6 months expanding and deepening her already strong network in the coastal conservation community. In November, she opened MRT's coast field office in Newport, in a shared space with the MidCoast Watersheds Council and the Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District. There is high demand for land trust services on the coast, and Margaret is already knee-deep in nascent projects that will come to fruition in the months and years ahead.

Tenmile Creek Bird Sanctuary Doubles in Size

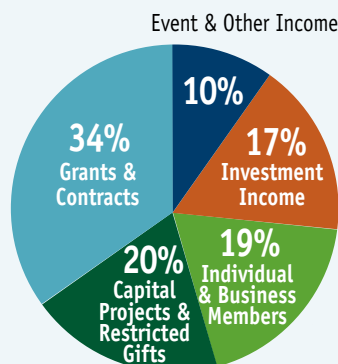
Portland Audubon's Tenmile Creek Sanctuary near Yachats doubled in size with the acquisition of two adjacent properties from Shotpouch Foundation. MRT has held conservation easements on all of these properties since 2007, and we are excited that they will now all be managed as one unit by Portland Audubon. In addition to these 225 acres, MRT holds conservation easements on another 250 acres in the Tenmile Creek drainage, protecting one of the best remaining examples of temperate rainforest found in Oregon's Coast Range and crucial habitat for marbled murrelets, Northern spotted owls, and Harlequin ducks.

FINANCIALS

Our detailed and audited financial statements will be available on our website in July. If you have any questions about our financials, please contact Allegra Jasper at (541) 345-2799 or by emailing allegra@mckenzie river.org.

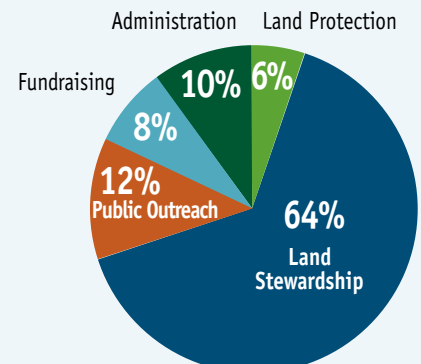
2021 INCOME:

\$6,420,411



2021 EXPENSES:

\$3,327,370



A Rivers to Ridges Legacy Endures



ELIZABETH GOWARD

Native Camas and Bradshaw's lomatium bloom in south Eugene.

At the center of the Ridgeline Trail network on the southern edge of Eugene, a 200-acre property known as South Eugene Meadows immerses visitors in a mix of upland prairie, oak savannah, and woodland. This addition to the park system was a 2012 stepping stone in the Rivers To Ridges Partnership, a collaborative vision that guides land protection and stewardship across community open spaces in the metropolitan area. It was also a legacy of Ed Miesen, a successful commercial banker and passionate conservationist who worked with the City on a reduced price or “bargain sale” that made the most of available funding. After retiring, Ed turned his attention to extended backpacking, traversing both the Continental Divide Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail before an aggressive cancer brought his life to an end in 2019.

As a donor and volunteer for McKenzie River Trust over the years, Ed found an outlet for his love for plants, wildlife, and inclusive outdoor recreation. His estate made a gift of nearly \$100,000 to the Trust, received in 2021. That kind of thoughtful planning and generosity will allow the McKenzie River Trust to work with partner organizations on the long-term stewardship of the Willamette Confluence Preserve, a 1,300-acre property at the confluence of the Middle and Coast Forks of the Willamette River. Last year the Trust and The Nature Conservancy reached an agreement to transfer ownership of the Preserve from TNC to MRT, a transfer we expect to happen this year. Our deepest thanks to Ed Miesen, and to all of you who have considered a gift to the McKenzie River Trust as part

of your estate planning. One historic root of the word “legacy” was “persons sent on a mission.” Estate gifts like Ed’s will carry our mission forward for generations.



TRASK BERDORTH

Ed Miesen celebrates with fellow Confluence Legacy Club members in 2015.

Investments in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice



ELIZABETH GOWARD

Students from Springfield High School learn on the land through the Miller Integrated Nature Experience program.

For over 30 years, the McKenzie River Trust has been a trusted partner in land conservation throughout the McKenzie basin and western Oregon. We have pursued our mission of “helping people protect and care for the lands and rivers they cherish” by focusing on habitat diversity and health, river dynamism, and wild landscapes. Over the past several years, we have identified a need to more explicitly acknowledge that people and communities have been, and continue to be, part of these ecosystems.

The “helping people” part of our mission compels us to ensure that we are a welcoming organization that fosters a sense of belonging and that our work benefits and engages all people, not just some. v Since 2017, we’ve been making investments in staff training, program development, and basin wide partnerships to better understand and attend to the intersection of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) with our conservation work and programming.

Prioritizing DEIJ supports the work of McKenzie River Trust in maintaining the landscape scale vision required to address climate change and community

needs as we work to maintain the ecological integrity of western Oregon’s landscapes. In 2021, we finalized a 3-year DEIJ Action Plan that will help to guide our work in creating a stronger organization through the integration of DEIJ principles.

Over the coming years, our commitments will focus on integrating DEIJ perspectives into our programmatic work, continuing our learning about the intersecting histories of racial injustice and land conservation, building relationships and engaging in equitable partnership within and outside the conservation sector, building a more diverse conservation movement, and supporting Indigenous sovereignty efforts through building and promoting reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities to advance opportunities for land access and tenure.

Organizational change takes time, proper consideration, and discussion, and we share this commitment with you, our supporters, having worked internally over many years to better understand our role and responsibilities in relation to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice work.

What is our Role in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Work?

As a land trust organization with resources and community trust, we are uniquely positioned to protect, restore, and manage land in our region in ways that ensure that people’s connection with the land is not limited by persistent and systemic disparities in power and privilege.

As a community-based organization, our tools can support communities that have been excluded or systemically harmed by land-based policies and practices rooted in settler colonialism and white dominant culture that have created the foundation of inequity that we inherit as an organization today.

As a member of a broader land trust movement, we have the responsibility to better understand and reckon with the historical legacy and ongoing structural inequities of land use and land ownership systems in our state and nation.

Living River Exploration Days



ELIZABETH GOWARD

Green Island visitors enjoy a picnic along the edge of the Willamette River during Living River Exploration Days.

“The excitement of my granddaughter at seeing plants, animals, birds, and the river,” “clear walking paths,

wide enough for hiking and holding hands,” and “seeing the changes on the landscape.” These are just a few of the memories people walked away from Green Island with in 2021. Protected in 2003 for fish and wildlife habitat, Green Island has been an anchor of McKenzie River Trust’s programming for more than a decade. Since that time, staff, contractors, and volunteers have planted more than a million trees and shrubs across the 1100-acre island that sits at the confluence of the McKenzie and Willamette Rivers.

In 2021, with the support of local businesses and an incredible group of volunteers, we began opening Green Island for self-guided exploration. With wide, flat gravel roads for walking, and vistas overlooking the Willamette River, more than 1,000 visitors were able to connect with this special place and one another. On the second Saturday of each month, March-December, the gates will continue to be opened for you to enjoy this incredible area. We hope you will join us.

The Return of Good Fire



PAUL GORDON - MEADOWHAWK DRONES

Andrew Reasoner Wildlife Preserve is located on Chelamela & Chemapho Kalapuyan homelands in Lumtumbuff (Long Tom Watershed).

In the fall of 2021, a cohort of Indigenous fire practitioners, their families, partners, and community members from throughout the northwest convened at Andrew Reasoner Wildlife Preserve to conduct a controlled burn. The burn was a significant step for local and regional Indigenous practitioners to reconnect with the land and traditional ecological practices conducted by Indigenous communities since time immemorial.

Between the time of European arrival and the past decade, cultural burning practices would not have been easy to implement, and depending on where, could even be outright banned, leaving Pacific Northwest forests, prairies, and wetlands without healthy fire for more than 200 years. Firefighting practice and rules created by federal and state agencies have primarily focused on putting fires out as quickly as possible. Now, 200 years later, we are experiencing the impacts of colonialism

in the West in the form of mega-fires and rapid habitat loss. This, combined with the surmounting threats of climate change has served as a wake up call to land managers who work in these fire dependent landscapes. As a result, conservation organizations and partners are actively working to help rebuild capacity for Indigenous leadership in land management in our region.

The fire at Andrew Reasoner Wildlife Preserve was one step in an Indigenous fire practitioner training program that aims to empower Indigenous communities as the primary fire practitioners on the landscape. The training program and cultural burn is the result of more than four years of collaborative work led by the Long Tom Watershed Council, Ecostudies Institute, and the Oregon Prescribed Fire Council. Consultation and financial support for this work has been provided by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, McKenzie River Trust, Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA), Rivers to Ridges Partnership, the Oregon Department of Forestry, The Nature Conservancy, and OSU Extension.

Finn Rock Reach – A Restoration of Hope



BRENT ROSS

In 2021, McKenzie River Trust completed the first phase of restoration at Finn Rock Reach.

The dust has long settled after last summer's river restoration project at Finn Rock Reach. Another generation of Chinook salmon has been born of the newly sorted gravels and begun their growth and travel downstream ahead of a five year ocean trip. The late spring rains have lifted the river to rediscovered heights, spreading slowly among the thousands of logs placed in myriad channels carved out of that floodplain in an intense period of heavy equipment use last July and August. Finn Rock Reach, arguably our most ambitious restoration project to date, has given

us reason, once again, to rethink our approach to living well with living rivers.

If you have traveled the McKenzie Highway corridor repeatedly over the last two years, you've witnessed an incredible transformation of the mid-valley. The September 2020 Holiday Farm Fire and the subsequent removal of trees from the roadside and the mountainside exposed the geology of the Cascades and the McKenzie River itself in ways not visible for centuries. You now see where small streams and tributaries connect, where the river valley narrows among steep, crumbling slopes, and where it once meandered across a broad floodplain. The river has changed dramatically in the last 100 years, simplified and disconnected from that floodplain. The Finn Rock Reach project is an attempt to turn back the clock on that change. By letting the river meander and slow, it nourishes the land, plants, animals, and people that thrive in such places. Water now moves at a third of its previous speed through those side channels, spreading over nearly twice the area it did before. And as it splits around log jams and

eddies out in undercuts, it does the work of building habitat, saturating the land, and growing the plants that will carry out the ecological recovery from the fire.

Last summer's project was the first of two phases of restoration. The second phase, equally impactful, will be carried out in 2023, in floodplain lands immediately upstream of the last year's effort. As the signs of heavy equipment fade away, and plant growth and the river itself soften the edges of the dirt work, we'll enter a third phase of restoration, one defined by a wait and see approach. We'll watch what the river does with those new log jams and islands and pools of deep water. We'll study how the salmon and bull trout and reddsides and sculpins respond. We'll learn from the beaver where our clumsy engineering can be transformed into art.

The second phase of restoration at Finn Rock will happen in summer, 2023, boosted by \$1.8 million in Congressionally Directed Spending. We'd like to extend a river of thanks to Congressman Peter DeFazio, Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, and their tireless, passionate staff for their leadership and support!



MONROE, FRESHWATERS ILLUSTRATED

Restoration Projects Manager Christer LaBrecque monitors water turbidity during the restoration project.

We'll marvel again as Finn Rock Reach and other places in the footprint of the Holiday Farm Fire recover before our eyes. And in that restoration we'll find some hope that 100 years from now, the people of the McKenzie Valley and beyond will look back with thanks to all of you who have made this work, and all the benefits it provides, possible.



120 Shelton McMurphey Blvd
Suite 270
Eugene, OR 97401
541-345-2799
mrt@mckenzieriver.org
www.mckenzieriver.org



Inside: 2021 Annual Report!

Not only our members, but everyone who shared our work with a friend or volunteered their time in 2021 made a powerful difference for local conservation efforts. Whether connecting with our work virtually or coming together on the land or in the community, your care and support have carried this enduring work forward from the Cascades to the Coast.

We simply cannot do this good work without the incredible support of our members and business supporters who continue to invest in a better future for land and water in western Oregon.

Thank you!

CONNECT WITH US! Find out the latest news and event information.



ELIZABETH GOWARD

Market of Choice volunteers help to plant trees on Green Island.



DAVID HERASIMTSCHUK, FRESHWATERS ILLUSTRATED

Pacific Lamprey in Oregon move between upland forest streams and the Pacific Ocean.