

2024 Annual Report



Protect. Connect. Restore. Sustain.

Four years ago, the McKenzie River Trust Board and staff members rallied behind a renewed strategic framework. Protect, Connect, Restore, Sustain—these four broad commitments have given structure to the work we do daily and have served as a guide for how we envision the future of land and water conservation in our community. They have led to more protected places, new partnerships, and connections between people and the natural world.

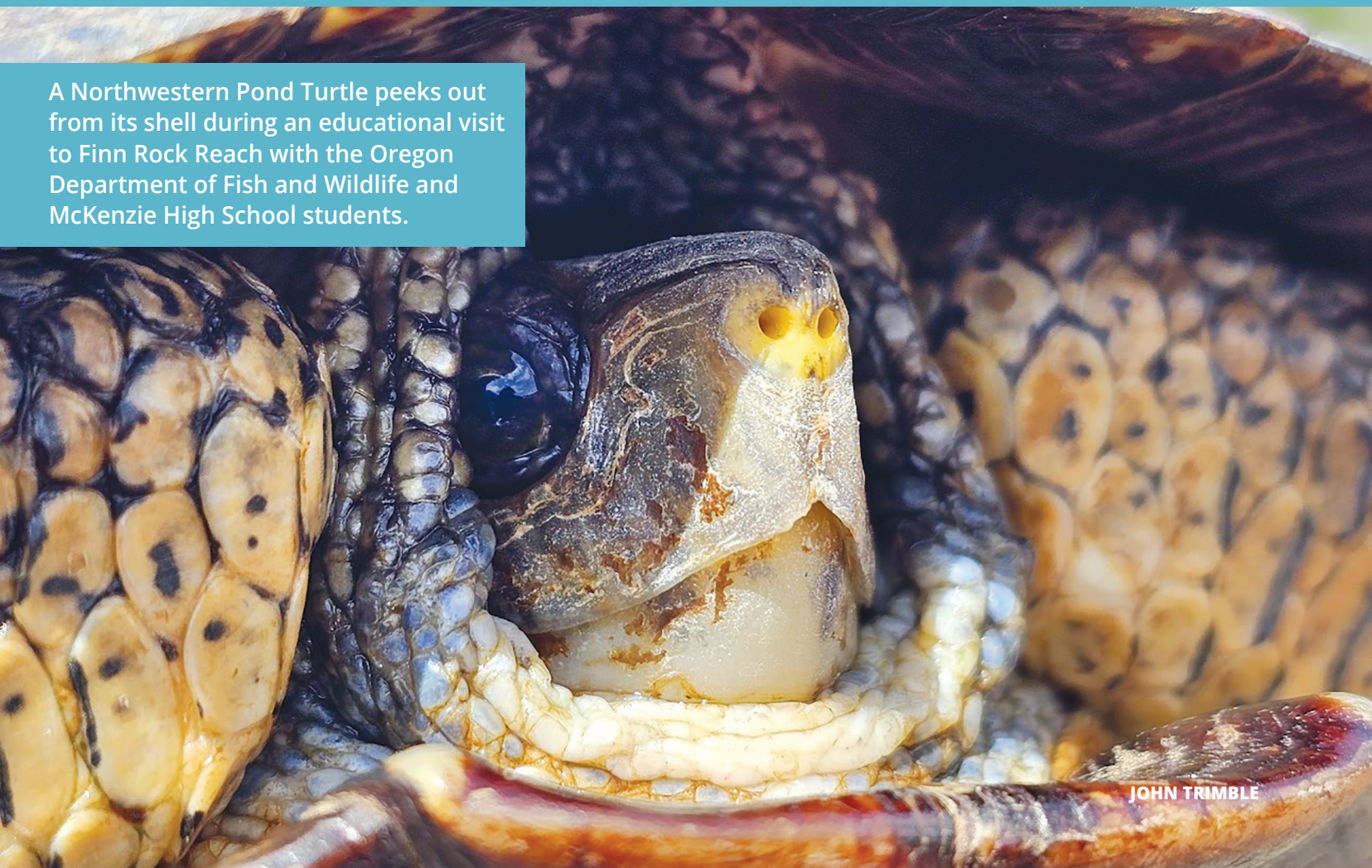
They have also pulled our gaze to the horizon, knowing that changing social and environmental climates will continue to evolve and shift how we approach our work.

Through the metrics and stories captured in this year's report, you will see that McKenzie River Trust is part of an extensive network of people and organizations for whom land and water are at the heart of our work and the core of our hearts.

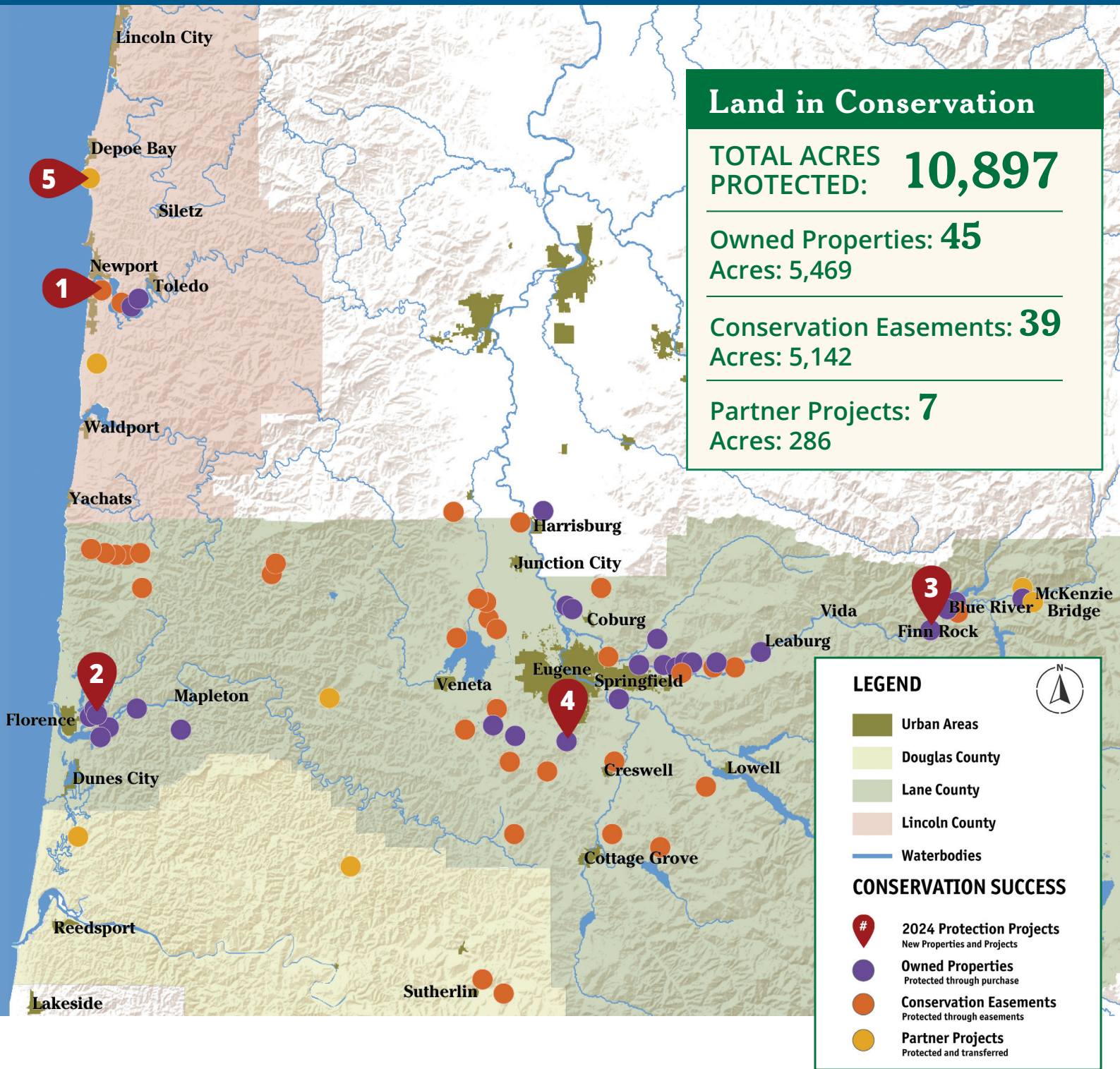
We hope you see yourself embedded and inseparable from these stories because your support was integral to all the successes, milestones, and accomplishments captured here.

As we come to the expiration of our current strategic plan and prepare to renew it in the year ahead, we are honored to have you alongside us, ready to build on our collective success. Thank you for making this work possible.

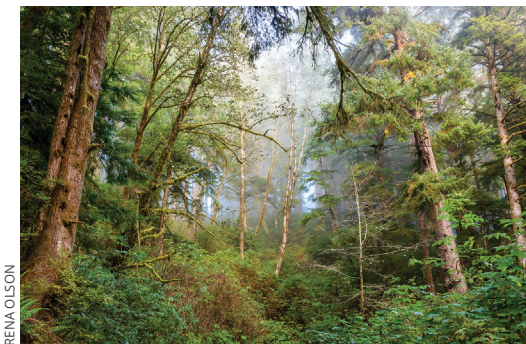
A Northwestern Pond Turtle peeks out from its shell during an educational visit to Finn Rock Reach with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and McKenzie High School students.



Protected Lands



1 Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center, 439 acres



RENA OLSON

The Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center conservation easement permanently protects 439 acres in the Yaquina River estuary. The learning center offers educational programming,

community events, and guided access to the historic site, which boasts mature spruce forests, tidal marshes, wetlands, and recovering rainforest habitats. **Learn more at www.yakonaoregon.org.**



BRADY HOLDEN

2 North Fork Bend, 245 acres

The North Fork Bend property includes 245 acres of historic tidal wetland in the Siuslaw River estuary. Local rancher, Nathan Large, sold it for conservation to The Nature Conservancy in Oregon, which then transferred it to the Trust in spring 2024. The property supported sheep and cattle production from the 1930s until the time of the sale. Now, the property is poised to support fish and wildlife, including Coho salmon, through habitat restoration efforts in the years ahead.



STEVE SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

3 Finn Rock Reach (Phase II), 636 acres

Nearly ten years after purchasing Finn Rock Reach on the McKenzie River, the Trust closed on an additional 636 acres in 2024. The purchase included three parcels of land leapfrogging public and Trust-owned lands. With these acres, the south side of the McKenzie River is now buffered by federal and Trust-protected lands between the mouth of the South Fork McKenzie River and Eagle Rock.



STEVE SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

4 South Fork Spencer Creek, 243 acres

The South Fork Spencer Creek property protects natural lands near Eugene's Ridgeline Trail System. It was purchased from a conservation-minded owner who had already completed significant prairie restoration on portions of the site. The area includes a range of niche habitat types, including oak woodland, savanna, and prairies, as well as mixed conifer and riparian forests, which provide a home for pileated and acorn woodpeckers, Columbia whitetail deer, northern red-legged frogs, and western bluebirds.

5 Cape Foulweather Returned to the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians



STEVE SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

In 2022, with the support of members like you, we took out a low-interest bridge loan to purchase Cape Foulweather in collaboration with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. The property was at risk of development on the open market, and the Tribe did

not have funding available to acquire it. After several years of collaboration with a range of partners, the Tribe secured federal funding and purchased the land from the Trust in 2024, recovering their first oceanfront property since historic land losses in the late 1800s.

This transaction is the second time the Trust has assisted the Siletz Tribe as they work to reclaim their ancestral lands (following the Fivemile Creek/Salamander property transaction in 2016). As a land trust, we have unique expertise in conservation real estate and are honored to work alongside our Indigenous neighbors to leverage these tools in support of Tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

In the years ahead, we will continue to build on the success of the Cape Foulweather collaboration. Thank you to all of our members for walking alongside us as we work to action our values in support of the original caretakers of Oregon's lands and waters.

With support from our members, McKenzie River Trust was able to cover \$50,000+ of interest-related costs for this project.

Growing Hope Along the McKenzie River



After the devastating Holiday Farm fire of 2020, nurturing the land’s recovery became a priority along the McKenzie River. Those efforts continued into 2024 when 185,000 native trees and shrubs were planted at Finn Rock Reach. Staff also continued participating in the Pure Water Partners program, which supported private landowners in

replanting 532 acres of fire-impacted land. Thanks to these efforts, visitors to the McKenzie River can now admire the vibrant green of a recovering understory, including ocean spray, elderberry, spirea, and Pacific ninebark, that has taken root alongside young trees and the resilient Douglas-fir and western red cedar trees that withstood the fire.

Staff member Anyah Preston takes a selfie with a valley pine she planted in 2021 as a part of Holiday Farm Fire recovery efforts on the McKenzie River.

Driving Equitable Access with David’s Chair



ELIZABETH GOWARD

Thanks to a budding partnership in the Mount Pisgah area, “off-pavement” no longer means “off-limits” for people who use mobility aids. In March of 2024, McKenzie River Trust partnered with Lane County Parks, Mount Pisgah Arboretum, and Travel Lane County to host a track chair demonstration day with mobility nonprofit David’s Chair. Participants from across the state gathered at the Willamette Confluence property to try a track chair and provide feedback to partners about the usability of the

highly sophisticated wheelchairs. After hearing broad support and enthusiasm from users, a formal partnership was established between the organizers to house two David’s Chairs at Lane County Parks’ Howard Buford Recreation Area for community members to reserve and use for free. These chairs will support our ongoing educational programming focusing on serving those with disabilities. They will also soon be available by reservation for parkgoers through the Mount Pisgah Arboretum.

Keara Milch pauses for a photo during a demonstration at the Willamette Confluence property in June 2024.

EVENTS



67 Public Tours & Events



17 Limited Mobility Tours



2,812 Participants

VOLUNTEERS



97 Volunteer Events



518 Unique Volunteers



5,129 Hours Worked

SAM SLATER



Tending the Land, Together



SARAH WHEELER

The Willamette Confluence property received extra care this year as First Friday volunteer projects moved downriver. Community members quickly got to work caring for this 1,305-acre property that boasts a range of niche habitats, including ponds, side channels, riparian forests,

Volunteer Meghan Mahoney smiles with a blackberry bramble heart she removed on Valentine's Day at the Willamette Confluence property.

upland oak and prairie, and conifer forests. Volunteers gathered monthly to remove invasive plant species, help tend paths to support limited-mobility programming, and connect with this special area that buffers Mount Pisgah and the Coast and Middle Forks of the Willamette River.



A tiny frog makes friends during a volunteer project.

Investing in the Future



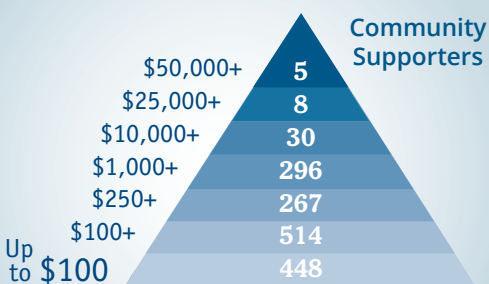
SARAH WHEELER

Katelyn Wells began volunteering with us while completing her bachelor's degree in Environmental Science. After graduating from the University of Oregon in spring 2024, she joined McKenzie River Trust as a stewardship intern and began applying her classroom learning professionally. Over the summer, Katelyn received hands-on training in equipment operation, coordinating youth and volunteers, and habitat restoration. During this time, she also implemented a self-directed research project to study the impacts of restoration on groundwater at Green Island.

Reflecting on her experience, Katelyn shared, "Interning for McKenzie River Trust empowered me as a land steward and ignited my drive for environmental restoration and conservation. I feel like I have a better understanding of the environmental sector, and I am leaving with tangible and specific knowledge that will help me navigate working in this field." Each season, we are inspired by the young professionals who are the future of land and water conservation. We had a fantastic summer working with Katelyn and cannot wait to see where the future takes her.

COMMUNITY GIVING

THANK YOU 2024 SUPPORTERS



In 2024, McKenzie River Trust utilized diverse funding sources for our projects. Our funding for the year included government and private grants alongside generous donations from members like you. In 2024, we also received significant support to

protect land at Finn Rock Reach and South Fork Spencer Creek through the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation program. Our audited financial statements and 990 will be available online for review in June 2025.

JOHN TRIMBLE



Salmon Make Use of New Habitat at Finn Rock Reach

Spring Chinook salmon are using new habitat at Finn Rock Reach. In 2021-23, restoration efforts created more than eighty acres of new aquatic habitat for salmon, bull trout, lamprey, turtles, and other animals to thrive in. This year,

the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife counted over 70 salmon redds (fish egg nests) in the area, up from 9 in 2021. In 2025, we aim to build on this success by expanding restoration efforts downstream into Quartz Creek.

Collaborative Stewardship Efforts Return Good Fire to the Landscape

WHITNEY RANDALL



also supported three burns at Coyote Spencer Wetlands. Further south, the Pollock Oaks conservation easement benefited from good fire under the leadership of the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians.

The need to restore good fire to the land has never been greater. As centuries-old fire suppression policies intersect with a decade-long drought and changing precipitation patterns, Oregon's unique landscapes need our care. That's why Rivers to Ridges partners and others across the state are pooling resources to increase the collective capacity of Tribes and other land managers to implement ecological burns.

This year, Land Steward Brent Ross became a certified burn manager, increasing the expertise and credentials the Trust brings to collaborative efforts. As we consider our role and responsibility to care for land and water, we thank our Indigenous partners for welcoming us onto their homelands and sharing their expertise as we aim to build collaborative stewardship models across our service area.

Staff member Brent Ross leads partners through a briefing before implementing an ecological burn at Coyote Spencer Wetlands in October.

Land managers across the Pacific Northwest are increasingly partnering with Indigenous communities to restore traditional land management practices, including using ecological (prescribed) fire. In 2024, burns occurred on three Trust-protected properties to benefit oak and prairie habitats. In mid-September, the Traditional Ecological Inquiry Program (TEIP) worked with regional partners to bring good fire back to the land

at the Andrew Reasoner Wildlife Preserve/Chaa-lamali, an area just outside of Eugene that is protected through a conservation easement. TEIP youth, staff, and Indigenous partners opened the burn using traditional lighting methods. They also shared the cultural, ecological, and community objectives of bringing fire and Indigenous fire science back onto the landscape with non-Indigenous fire practitioners. This burn partnership

An Enduring Commitment to Place



ELIZABETH GOWARD

From left to right: Tribal Council member Teresa Spangler, Chief Doug Barret, contractor Dave Porter, and Governor Tina Kotek visit haich ikt'at'u in June.

In early November, McKenzie River Trust staff, contractors, and partners gathered at haich ikt'at'u (formerly Waite Ranch) for a small ceremony to honor the many hands who have carried the tidal wetland restoration work forward on the property. Chief Doug Barrett of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, who are leading the restoration efforts, emphasized

the importance of partnership and his hope to see the effort replicated through additional collaborative projects on the Tribes' ancestral lands. The restoration of haich ikt'at'u took many years to design and permit. In 2023, the Tribe successfully acquired grant funding to begin project implementation. After two seasons of on-the-ground work, the land's transformation is well underway.

Looking ahead, the Trust is working with partners at the Tribe and Siuslaw Watershed Council to identify additional funding opportunities to bring the project across the finish line. Once complete, the project will offer an additional 180 acres of tidal wetland, including miles of salmon habitat in the Siuslaw River estuary. The past decade has presented many unforeseen challenges for this project. We share our thanks with the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, the Siuslaw Watershed Council, our staff, and other partners, for their enduring commitment to this special place.



BRENT ROSS

Caretakers of the Land



SARAH MERKLE

Staff members Whitney Randall and Sam Slater pause for a photo while monitoring reseeding efforts at Coyote Spencer Wetlands in May.

People and land have always been interconnected. As a land trust that permanently protects land and water, we take seriously the responsibility of its long-term care. Our land stewardship team works throughout the seasons to protect special habitats, from the Cascade foothills to the rocky shores of the central Oregon coast. In 2024, that meant caring for more than 10,000 acres of land. Nearly every day of the week, our stewardship team is outside

detecting and removing invasive plant species, planting and caring for young native forbs, shrubs, and trees, maintaining vital infrastructure, and responding to unforeseen challenges like January's ice storm. From utilizing heavy equipment to remove acres of blackberry to gently replanting native vegetation, we are committed to ensuring that Oregon's special places are protected and cared for today and for generations to come.

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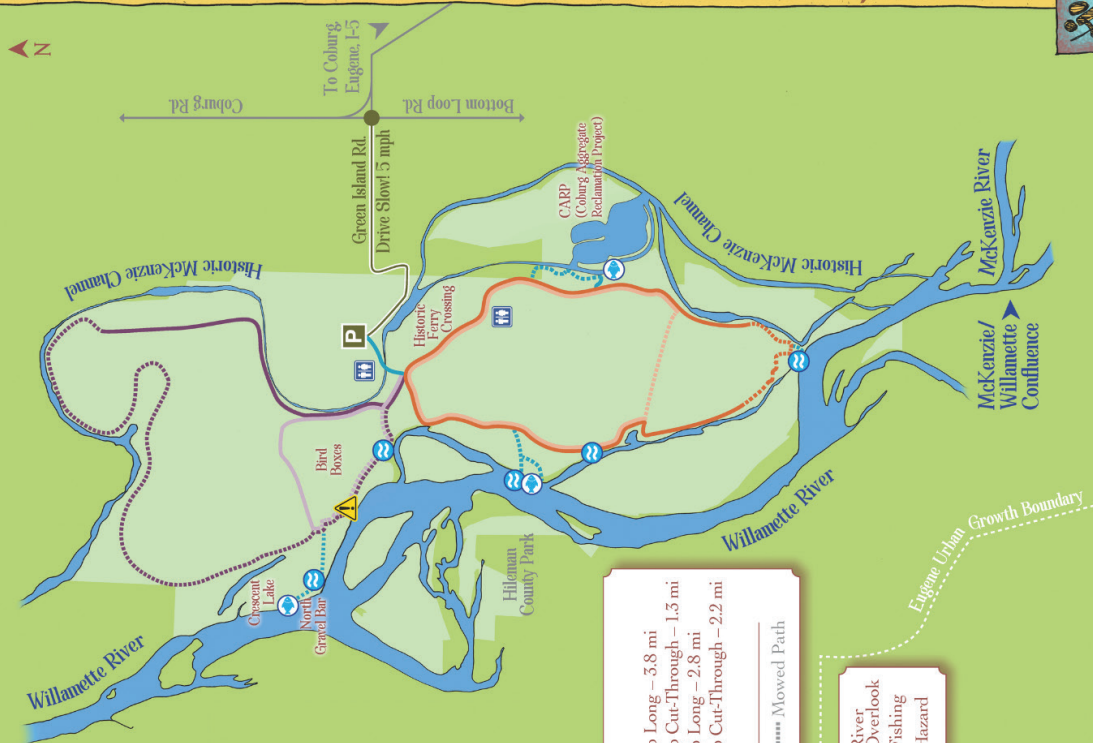


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Living River Exploration Days

Explore Green Island

2ND SATURDAY
MARCH-DECEMBER



- Trails**
- North Loop Long - 3.8 mi
 - North Loop Cut-Through - 1.3 mi
 - South Loop Long - 2.8 mi
 - South Loop Cut-Through - 2.2 mi
 - Side Trails
- Gravel Road Mowed Path

- Toilets
- Parking
- MIRT Land
- River Overlook
- Fishing
- Hazard