

# River alliance continues toward goals

*Group meets to expand its board and sharpen focus on projects to help the river*

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MOLALLA PIONEER

Molalla River Alliance, a coalition of more than 45 organizations and government and citizen groups, met last Wednesday to discuss progress and future goals in the Molalla River Corridor.

"I don't think I'm aware of another organization that is comprised of such a diverse membership," MRA president Mike Moody said. "I think we are making a really good environmental investment. ... We can really effect a change in this corridor."

The group formed early this year to protect the health and quality of the Molalla River and to provide safe, family-friendly recreation opportunities.

The organization is entirely volunteer-run and hopes to achieve nonprofit status within the next year, MRA secretary Fran

Taylor said.

"We're capital poor, but I think we're human rich and I think that's the strength of this organization," Moody said.

MRA opened an office in Molalla this summer, shared with Friends of Family Farmers and the Native Fish Society. The group also recently launched a Web site, [www.molallariveralliance.org](http://www.molallariveralliance.org). Moody hopes the office and Web site will serve as tools for educating the public about the river.

At Wednesday's meeting, Alliance members voted to add two new positions to the MRA board. Trout Creek Road resident and small woodland owner Ilene Waldorf and Molalla Police Department Sgt. Gordon White were elected to serve as board members at large.

MRA members have divided into several committees to focus on specific concerns relating to the Molalla River. Each committee gave a report on their progress



MOODY

and recent projects at last week's meeting.

Recreation committee members Bill Taylor and Erik Fernandez discussed MRA's efforts to achieve a wild and scenic river congressional designation for the Molalla River.

"We are very optimistic that legislation will be passed, hopefully in the coming session," Taylor said.

The Sierra Club, Clackamas County Commissioners, City of Molalla, Bark and other organizations have already written letters in support of adding the Molalla River to the list of wild and scenic rivers.

The designation is awarded to rivers deemed to have outstanding recreation, scenic, cultural, fish and geological values.

"Once it's protected, you can't do anything to diminish those values," Fernandez said. "It's basically a tool that allows you to protect the watershed."

Fernandez said the designation only

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**Mike Moody**  
President, Molalla River Alliance

applies to publicly-owned land and the private landowners would not be impacted.

Molalla city manager John Atkins presented for the education and outreach committee.

The committee is working to develop a brochure for the MRA paid for by a \$1,500 grant from Clackamas County Tourism, who also provided a \$1,500 grant for developing the organization's new Web site.

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Atkins said the committee hopes to add lists of local businesses to the Web site who offer services that might interest those coming to the area for tourism along the Molalla River.

The committee is also working to include the Molalla Corridor in a Geotourism project and is continuing to pursue options for getting cellular coverage in the corridor.

Sgt. Gordon White and MRA treasurer and Molalla Retreat owner Bob Loucks represented the law enforcement and communications committee.

White said that Clackamas County Sheriff's Office, the Bureau of Land Management and Molalla Police Department worked together throughout the summer to curb problems in the corridor, pinpointing the Glen Avon Bridge and the Trout Creek area as prime sites for parties.

There were no drownings or other fatalities in the corridor this year, White said. There was also a reduction in poach-

ing and residents say the wild parties that have plagued the area in years past ceased to exist.

MPD plans to continue devoting five hours of patrol time in the corridor each month on random days throughout the winter.

"We don't want people to forget us — that we're still up here," White said.

On behalf of the MRA, Loucks presented White with a Distinguished Leader Award.

"We really would like to recognize Gordon for his efforts in the corridor," Loucks said.

Loucks also discussed the committee's efforts to enhance communications in the corridor and said they would meet with Molalla Communications Company to discuss options.

The committee is continuing to look into installing an emergency call box in the corridor.

MRA board member Mark Schmidt represented the science committee and discussed the status of fish in the Molalla River. A spawning survey revealed that wild river steelhead numbers in the river's

lower streams were on par with previous years, he said.

However, spring Chinook numbers were down to about a quarter of typical numbers. Schmidt said that recovering spring Chinook salmon would be a focus.

"We want rivers that have diverse and multiple species," Schmidt said.

BLM outdoor recreation planner Zach Jarrett gave a report on the increased usage of the Molalla River Corridor this past season.

"We estimate based on our car counters that 65,000 people came in and out of the corridor during our high season," Jarrett said.

In the Table Rock Wilderness alone, about 1,300 visitors came through, up 200 visits from last year.

In spite of the rising numbers, Jarrett said the BLM noted a decrease in vandalism.

"This year we really had a pretty low-key year by Molalla River Corridor standards," Jarrett said.

Kay Patteson of Molalla RiverWatch said that her group's annual cleanup events noted a reduction in trash littering the corridor from previous years. She credited BLM and the police department's added presence for influencing the change.

The meeting also included a presentation against liquefied natural gas pipelines given by Amy Harwood of Bark, an environmental watchdog on federal land agencies.

Harwood discussed concerns

of clear-cutting of forests in the National Forest.

"This is not a repudiation. This is a lot of growth forests," Harwood said. "I think that Oregon is serious about moving another energy source. We don't want to be dependent on fossil fuels."

Harwood urged MRA to take a stand against the pipelines by writing a resolution.

The next MRA meeting is planned for April 1, 2004.