



Molalla River Alliance

Newsletter 11

## Commemorating our Molalla scenic waterway

There's something new to see on the Molalla River. It's located in Feyrer Park—the popular picnic spot, family reunion site and RV campground just outside Molalla.

There, with support from the Clackamas Office of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the County Parks Department, an interpretive sign has been installed commemorating Oregon's newest official scenic waterway.

The project was commissioned by the Molalla River Alliance and was designed to serve as an interpretive and historical introduction to the Molalla River—the only free-flowing river in the Willamette Basin.

Elements of the sign include brief narratives about the first inhabitants of the river, the Molalla People, as well as the early European settlers, the Feyers and their descendants, who donated 27 acres of riverfront to the county for use as a public park. It also includes geographic information about the Molalla River, and a map tracing its flow from the Western Cascades to its confluence with the Willamette River at Canby.

The project was made possible by a generous grant from the Molalla Running Club, a nonprofit organization that sponsors running events in the Molalla area.

The Molalla River Scenic Waterway encompasses 13.2 miles of river—from the Glen Avon Bridge upstream to the confluence of the Table Rock and Copper Creek forks—and is managed by the federal Bureau of Land Management.



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### *Save the date!*

Our next general membership meeting is **Friday, May 5**, at the Molalla Retreat, 9 a.m. to Noon. As usual, we have a packed agenda, a great speaker, and good stuff to eat and drink at the refreshments table.

# A goal achieved, and more

By John Atkins  
MRA President



**I**n our cover story about the new interpretive sign at Feyrer Park commemorating official state scenic waterway status for the Molalla River, the MRA has taken what we hope will be the first step of many

more to come in our efforts to attract visitors to the Molalla community. It has a lot to offer folks who like to hike, fish, hunt, mountain bike, canoe and kayak, golf, motocross, camp, picnic, go to the rodeo and even skydive.

The standout natural attraction is the Molalla River itself. It was not that many years ago that the scenic upper Molalla was unsavory territory—a haven for squatters, a dumping ground, a place unsafe and unfit for family outings

Thanks to the City of Molalla, Canby Utility, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the Bureau of Land Management and many other organizations and individuals affiliated with the Molalla River Alliance, all that has changed.

Annual river cleanups organized by Molalla River Watch that once netted tons of garbage and litter now collect only a tiny fraction of that amount; off-road camping areas stripped of native vegetation and despoiled with trash and human waste are being rehabilitated by community volunteers.

New congregate campsites along the river offer potable water, restrooms, waste disposal containers and fire pits. It is a

remarkable makeover the whole community can take pride in. The Scenic Waterway sign unveiled in Feyrer Park represents a milestone of progress supported and carried out by many players over many years. They're all still on the job.

## Caring for the Molalla

- American Whitewater
- Bureau of Land Management
- Canby Utility
- City of Molalla
- Clackamas County
- Clackamas Soil & Water Conservation District
- Coastal Conservation Association
- Feyrer family descendants
- Molalla Communications
- Molalla High School Green Team
- Molalla River Alliance
- Molalla River Anglers
- Molalla River Watch
- Molalla Running Club
- Native Fish Society
- Northwest Steelheaders
- Oregon Equestrian Trails
- Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality
- Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
- Oregon Dept. of Water Resources
- Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept.
- Oregon State Police
- Oregon Water Enhancement Board
- Oregon Wild
- Solve
- Weyerhaeuser Co.

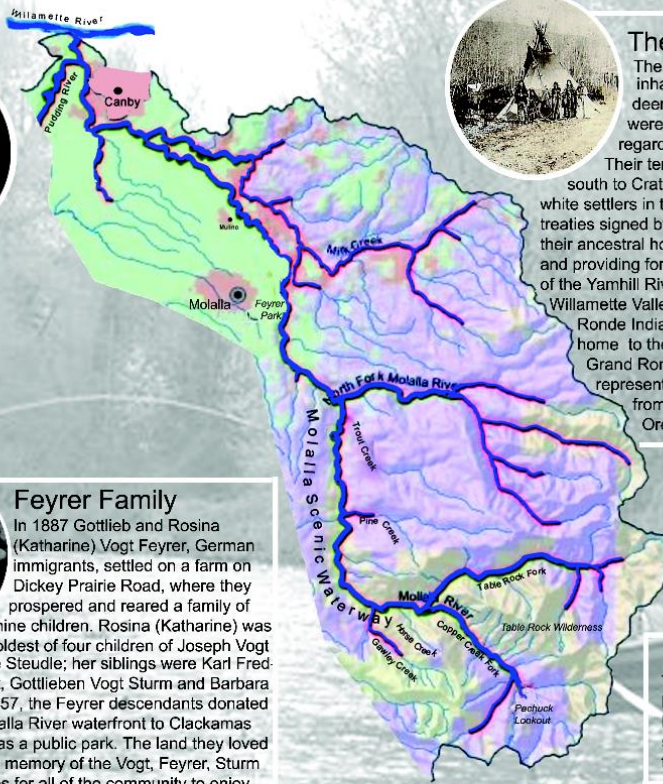
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



# Molalla River Basin and Scenic Waterway

## Our Treasured River

The Molalla River flows 51 miles from its headwaters in the Table Rock Wilderness to the Willamette River at Canby. It is the source of drinking water for the cities of Molalla and Canby. It is the largest free-flowing river in the upper Willamette Basin. It supports a wild winter steelhead population, coho and Chinook salmon, and bass, rainbow and cutthroat trout, among other species. In 2016, a 13.1-mile stretch of the Molalla River from Glen Avon Bridge upstream to the confluence of the Table Rock and Copper Creek forks, was designated by Gov. Kate Brown as an Oregon Scenic Waterway.



## The Molalla People

The Molalla People were the original inhabitants of this basin, where elk, deer, salmon, steelhead and berries were abundant. The Molalla were regarded as skilled hunters and fishers. Their territory once extended from Mt. Hood south to Crater Lake. The arrival and influx of white settlers in the 1800s led to two separate treaties signed by the Molalla in 1855, ceding their ancestral homelands to the U.S. Government and providing for their removal to the headwaters of the Yamhill River on the west side of the Willamette Valley. It later became the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation in 1857, and is home to the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, representing more than 27 tribes and bands from across Western Oregon.



## Feyerer Family

In 1887 Gottlieb and Rosina (Katharine) Vogt Feyerer, German immigrants, settled on a farm on Dickey Prairie Road, where they prospered and reared a family of nine children. Rosina (Katharine) was the oldest of four children of Joseph Vogt and Anna Marie Steudle; her siblings were Karl Fredrick (Fritz) Vogt, Gottlieben Vogt Sturm and Barbara Vogt Dick. In 1957, the Feyerer descendants donated 27 acres of Molalla River waterfront to Clackamas County for use as a public park. The land they loved was donated in memory of the Vogt, Feyerer, Sturm and Dick families for all of the community to enjoy.



## Recreation Magnet

The Molalla Scenic Waterway lies within the Molalla River Recreation Corridor. It is full of scenic wonders and is a magnet for outdoor enthusiasts.



*Caring for the Molalla:* American Whitewater • Bureau of Land Management • Canby Utility • City of Molalla • Clackamas County • Clackamas Soil & Water Conservation Dist. • Coastal Conservation Assn. • Molalla H.S. Green Team • Molalla River Anglers • Molalla River Alliance • Molalla River Watch • Molalla Running Club • Native Fish Society • Northwest Steelheaders • Oregon Equestrian Trails • Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality • Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife • Oregon Dept. of Water Resources • Oregon Parks & Recreation Dept. • Oregon State Police • Oregon Trout • Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board • Oregon Wild • Solve by Watershed, Inc.

Shown here is the layout of the commemorative sign erected in Feyerer Park.



## Sign Unveiled

Descendants of Molalla settlers gathered at Feyerer Park for their annual reunion and to unveil the commemorative sign commissioned by the MRA. From left to right,  
 Dale Sturm - Representing the Sturm Family  
 Becky Wolf - Representing the Feyerer Family  
 Tom Dick - Representing the Dick Family  
 Hannah Schink - Representing the Feyerer Family  
 Bob Oblack - Representing the Feyerer Family  
 Gloria Albuschie Representing the Vogt Family

...with a next generation cousin looking on with approval.



# A Fish Story

By Mark Schmidt  
With John Atkins

Twilight was upon the river as I put away my work papers, stood up from my desk, and stretched. Out the window of my old house above the Molalla River, shafts of light filtered through the firs onto the current. The roiling water looked like it needed a few casts with my vintage Scott fly rod. I chose to leave my waders hanging in the attic closet, and hurried down to the gravel spit separating the North Fork and main stem of the river. In the fading light, I flipped my fly out into the swirling confluence.

After half-dozen casts, my line

settled into a swing through the holding water. I stood at the head of the drift, already immersed in the evening, watching a kingfisher fly past on his way downriver, when the line began to slip



*The confluence hole*

quietly through my fingers. It just kept slipping away, in a series of three or four soft pulls. It is possible that on that day I had grown distracted by the familiar white sound of the river, the streamers of golden light slanting on the current, finding satisfaction in merely breathing the fresh air...

Though I was casting, my focus was not upon my fishing; perhaps I had forgotten the intense electricity of a wild creature coming to my fly. And so, in that instant, as the line was being pulled from my loop, I actually wondered, "What's happening?" It was a long second before I came awake to the realization, "Oh, my God, it's a fish", and then my reflexes took charge. My grip automatically tightened against the cork, I lifted the rod tip, and

an overwhelming explosion of "wild" nearly jerked the rod from my hand.

It felt as though my line had gotten tangled around the bumper of the old Buick that was speeding at that moment down the river road. The line ripped through my grip, searing the crease of my index finger. The old Bauer

reel was whistling as the line screamed out through the guides.

In that moment, I came completely alive, noticing, delighting and actually  
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savoring the feeling of hot pain in my finger, breathing, gulping-in the crisp evening air, and riding the thrill of a wild fish, as she powered down and across the stream on a spectacular first run. The confluence hole is not a very large pool, and it is rather shallow in the tail, so she was on the surface almost immediately, proposing, then she flew into the air with one of those corkscrew, end-over-end leaps, and I realized that I might never see her again.

In the shallow tail-out she turned, choosing to return to the deeper water near my feet. Although I did have the presence of mind not to put any undue pressure on her she was going to go wherever she pleased, and she chose to race back to her holding water, nose down, and sulk.

I could neither see her, nor move her. I could feel the pulse of her swimming motion, but the 12'-6" Scott could not budge her, nor excite her. She just lay there, for over five minutes. So, I decided to see if I could get her to abandon her position, and I swung the rod down and behind her.

That did the trick, and I was immediately sorry for my decision. Man, when she turned it on, it was actually scary. She tore off across the pool, then began a radius run to the left around the tail-out. She was so fast and powerful that the line was still at two o'clock while she was ripping through the pool at half-past ten. She tore through the surface, did a strong lean with the current, and threw herself into another cartwheel. She came full sideways in the flip and I realized just how big she was.

God, she was pretty; ice white belly, with a trace of pink on her lateral line. The spray of her leap had not yet settled to the surface and she was coming back at me like a missile.

Thank God for long rods, and small pools... I slapped the fender of the Bauer reel and grabbed enough line to keep the hook in place. And again, it was nothing I did to prevent her escape with that trick. She was just running so fast that the drag of the line held the hook in the corner of her jaw.



She ran to my feet again, and nosed down under her rock. She was in her chosen lie, and there was simply no moving her. I leaned on the Scott rod, for another five minutes, before she allowed me to turn her downstream again. This time she was not quite as strong. I was able to hold her on my side of the stream, but she slid her belly against the rocks where the rivers come together, and that caused her become seriously alarmed. She ran off another 90 feet of line and backing, went across the pool and parked sideways in the current for a brief moment.

It was good for me that she was most comfortable at her favorite rock, so she soon allowed me to winch her back to my feet. Thereafter it was a series of rolling her over, and watching her return to her rock, perhaps six times, at one minute intervals.

She was tiring, and I could hold her near the surface, on the far side of the seam. The water was smooth and I could  
*Continued on last page.*

# Jack Hammond honored for service to MRA

Jack Hammond, a long-time member of the Molalla River Alliance and its vice president, is the recipient of the Ryan Morgan Service Award.

The award is given annually to the individual who exemplifies the values of the MRA in representing our organization



to the community, affiliated groups, donors and supporters.

In presenting the award, MRA president John Atkins credited Hammond for his dedication in

advancing the MRA's efforts to protect and enhance water quality and native habitat on the Molalla, while serving as a policy advisor to the MRA's board and as an advocate before county, state and federal agencies.

"Our reputation as a well-grounded, inclusive and fair-minded organization that values the views of all who have an interest in the Molalla Watershed is due in no small measure to Jack's patient and effective counsel," Atkins said. "The MRA has benefitted greatly by his continuing contributions."

Hammond, a retired lawyer specializing in water, energy and municipal issues, represented the MRA on the citizens' advisory group that worked with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

in developing—and seeing through to adoption—research and recommendations leading to the designation of the Molalla Scenic Waterway by Gov. Kate Brown.

The award is given in memory of Ryan Morgan of Molalla, an energetic civic leader, youth mentor and founding member of the MRA who lost his life in a kayaking accident on the Little White Salmon river in 2009.

## Now, a cure for the DDS/MRA syndrome

Losing energy toward the end of the day? Not sleeping well? Feeling one or two fries short of a happy meal?

Don't despair. These are symptoms of DDS/MRA—Delayed Donor Support for the Molalla River Alliance. Fortunately, there's a cure: Just cut a check payable to the MRA and drop it in the mail. You'll feel a whole lot better right away.

You'll have the peace of mind that comes from knowing you're helping our all-volunteer, nonprofit organization continue its efforts to strengthen returns of native steelhead and salmon in the Molalla River, while working to protect its habitat, natural beauty and water quality for everyone to enjoy. That's Molalla River Alliance, PO Box 727, Molalla, OR 97038.

### **Your MRA Board of Directors**

**President:** John H. Atkins, Jr.

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**Vice-President:** Jack Hammond

**Treasurer:** Ilene Waldorf

**Secretary:** Fran Taylor

**Directors:** Mark Schmidt

Tom Derry

Bill Taylor

Mike Wagner

Gordon White



# The mysterious Molalla Log House

On high ground a few miles south of what would become the settlement of Molalla—possibly before the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1805 and well before the coming of European settlers—a large structure, meticulously crafted of interlocking timbers, stood near a native American trade route.

Who built it? What was its purpose? What kind of tools would have been used to notch, shape and fit the logs so tightly that no chinking was required? How could such a unique structure have come to be constructed in what was then a very remote place?

These questions—and some historical theories—will be explored in a special presentation to members of the Molalla River Alliance at its annual meeting on **Friday, May 5** at the Molalla Retreat.



*The logs were hewn and notched so expertly that no chinking between them was needed to keep out the cold.*



*Variously used as a house, granary, animal shelter, machine shed and hay storage building over many decades, the Molalla Log House was saved from collapse in 2008, dismantled, and moved to a warehouse for rehabilitation.*

The presentation will be given by architectural historian Pam Hayden, who helped save the historic structure from collapse and has worked for many years to unravel its mysteries.

It is known from local records that the log structure was moved from its original location to a nearby farm in the 1890s and put to a variety of uses over the decades.

One theory is that it was built by Russian farmers and craftsmen sent here by the Russian Crown, with an eye toward colonization, to support fur trappers and traders exploiting the Pacific Northwest's bounty of fur-bearing animals.

But that's not the only theory. Lately another explanation has been suggested that could also account for the appearance of this expertly hewn landmark here more than 200 years ago. Find out on May 5—and what the future holds for the Molalla Log House.

## --A Fish Story

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see her clearly... see the slim pink line, and soft crimson of her cheek, the form and beauty of a classic wild fish. There are really no words to describe the amazing beauty of these creatures.

Soon, she allowed me to lift her enough that I could grab the line. She was not ready to let me land her, but she was willing to allow me to slip my hand down to the fly. I desired to measure her against my rod... to grab the wrist of her tail... just to help me confirm her size; but I simply pulled the fly free, and nudged her toward her rock... and she was gone.

I walked back up the trail to "The Riverhouse." This home has stood on this spot for 70 years, erected by a logging concern when log trucks hauled the giant old-growth Douglas fir out of the Molalla River forests to the mills in Molalla, Canby and Oregon City.

For the last 15 of those years, The Riverhouse had sheltered my family and anchored my sense of place as I plied the Molalla's pools and drifts. Then it was not so unusual to hook and land a steelhead, which is best eaten fresh from

the river or smoke-cured after hours over an alderwood fire. Now, hooking a steelhead is uncommon. The rule is catch-and-release only, and smoked steelhead comes from the market. I can live with that. Without recovery of the species, the adventure cannot persist.

That evening's encounter was that which anglers dream of. Indeed, we go out in search of the promise of those chance-of-a-lifetime moments that are beyond explanation.

The struggle had lasted in excess of twenty minutes. I would estimate the fish at 14 pounds, but I will always remember her as a whole lot bigger than that.

*Mark Schmidt is a lifelong resident of the Molalla area, a founding board member of the Molalla River Alliance, and Molalla River Steward for the Native Fish Society.*

**Now on Facebook . . .**

### **Molalla River Corridor Happenings**

Useful information about the recreation opportunities and events going on in the corridor. Check it out! Post info!

**Find us at:**

[www.molallariveralliance.org](http://www.molallariveralliance.org)



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