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### *Save the date*

Our next general membership meeting is Friday, May 2, 2014, at the Molalla Retreat, from 9 a.m. to Noon. As always, an enjoyable, informative program is on tap, and refreshments will be provided. See you there!

### After 60-year absence

# Chub makes comeback in the Molalla River basin

By Peggy Savage

An ODFW Native Fish Investigation team has found the first Oregon chub in the river since Eisenhower was president.

Biologists from ODFW's Native Fish Investigations Program recently teamed up with the Molalla River Watch. The result – the first sighting of Oregon chub in the lower Willamette basin in 60 years.

Last month, the NFI biologists discovered two populations of the threatened native minnow in the Molalla River Basin, the first to be seen in the river since Eisenhower was president.

Historically, Oregon chub occupied the Willamette River from the mouth of the Clackamas to the Coast Fork and Middle Fork of the Willamette River. The last observation of these fish in the lower Willamette, however, was in 1953 at Oregon City.

“Oregon chub were one of those things we have been looking for a long time,” said Brian Bangs, an ODFW biologist working on native fish investigations. “Biologists at OSU were looking to find populations up there in the Molalla. And then in one day in September, they found Oregon chub in two separate areas. We thought the fish were gone, so this is fantastic.”

The tiny fish were found in Milk Creek near the Canby-  
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wemayfly.org

Dave Herasimtschuk © FI

*A native Oregonian, this iridescent looking chub has been the focus of a successful recovery effort over the last 20 years. (Thanks to Freshwaters Illustrated for the use of this picture).*

# A year of progress for the MRA

By John Atkins  
MRA President



Upon looking back on the year that was, we can note with satisfaction that our Molalla River Alliance made notable progress on some of our key objectives as they relate to protecting our Molalla River

habitat and watershed while promoting by family-friendly recreation in the river corridor.

This past spring, MRA board members, along with folks from affiliate organizations, pitched in with Bureau of Land Management recreation staffers to prepare and equip two congregate campsites along the riverfront in time for use by summer campers.

These new facilities—complete with potable water, restrooms, dumpsters, trails, tables and BBQ rings—continue and enhance a long-standing tradition of streamside camping while making it possible for scattered, degraded campsites here and there along the river to be closed for camping and rehabilitated with native plantings.

In another forward step, your MRA board agreed to become the nonprofit sponsor for Molalla's Wild River BBQ Cook-Off, held over a July weekend in Clark Park, next to the Buckeroo Rodeo Grounds in Molalla.

As the officially-sanctioned Oregon BBQ Championship, the event draws teams of serious pitmasters from around the northwest to compete for prize money,

bragging rights and a chance to compete in national BBQ Cookoffs. Net proceeds from Molalla's Wild River BBQ CookOff benefit the Molalla River Alliance.

The MRA was the beneficiary of a little over \$1,200 from this year's event. The revenue is important, because the MRA relies exclusively on member donations, grants and fundraising events to carry out our activities. The BBQ event also provides a great venue for the MRA to inform folks as to what we're all about.

On your 2014 calendar, please reserve Saturday, July 20, or Sunday, July 21, for sampling pit-cooked "low and slow" BBQ (chicken, pork, brisket and ribs) with your family and friends!

One of the most surprising—and gratifying—biological discoveries in many years was the announcement that for the first time in six decades, native Oregon chub have been found in the Molalla River by fisheries biologists (See page 1).

It means that recovery efforts on the Molalla by state and federal agencies as well as MRA-affiliate organizations over the past 20 years or more are paying off. Our lead story details this important discovery and is reprinted from the *Molalla Pioneer* with permission of its editor and author, Peggy Savage.

Last but not least, the MRA is indebted to Sen. Ron Wyden for including the Molalla River for protection in his list of "Oregon Treasures," which are included in the senator's landmark O&C legislation introduced in November. Our Congressional supporters for Wild and Scenic status include Sen. Jeff Merkley and Rep. Kurt Schrader, who have been behind us from the get-go.

*John H. Atkins, Jr.*

# Oregon Chub makes a comeback in the Molalla

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Mulino Bridge and in Feyrer Park near Molalla. Oregon chub had not been documented in the Molalla basin previously, he said.

Since 1991, ODFW's Native Fish Investigations Program has conducted surveys at more than 50 locations in the lower Willamette in an attempt to locate this species, without success.

Then in 2013, NFI partnered with the Molalla River Watch to identify and survey additional locations in the Molalla River basin. Bangs said Kay Patteson of Molalla River Watch worked with biologists during the investigation.

Oregon chub thrived in off-channel habitats such as beaver ponds, oxbows, backwater sloughs and flooded marshes. But nonnative fish species, such as largemouth bass and bluegill, devour the tiny Oregon chub, and are common in the off-channel and slow flowing habitats preferred by the chub.

"The chub's defenses are to dive into vegetation and hide, but that's the same area the bluegill and bass hunt," he said.

The impact of nonnative fish, combined with the alteration or loss of many off-channel habitats and changes in river flow due to the construction of the Willamette dams, led ODFW biologists to believe that Oregon chub were completely killed off in the lower Willamette.

Now, this Molalla basin finding extends the range of Oregon chub 70 river miles north. Although populations were historically documented below Willamette falls, the current known distribution is close to the historical distribution of Oregon chub.

"The Molalla basin has a lot of alluvial flood plain that people have not destroyed yet — there are no dams on the Molalla — it's a natural system," Bangs said. "So I got interested in surveying the system and talked to Kay. She got me information and helped my motivation to get going on this."

Bangs said a big problem in finding Oregon chub is that they hide out in aquatic vegetation.

"There is a lot of river out there, and we are talking about a minnow that's an inch and a half long," he said. "So with all those streams, it's a needle in a haystack."

Bangs joked that the "world record Oregon chub"

measured about 3 and one-half inches. But the chub are important to the sustainability of Oregon rivers.

Being tiny, they are low on the food chain, and are a food source for trout and salmon — at least they were, before the bass and crappie moved into the river basin, he said.

But with this find, Oregon fish biologists are feeling optimistic.

"Even though they are small fish, they are abundant, so when we find some of them, we know there are more," he said. "Get a small beaver pond, and it can support thousands of chub. They are a food source for trout and salmon, but are over-predated by nonnative fish like bass.

NFI biologists are planning to seek out and collaborate with partners in the Molalla basin in 2014 and beyond to sample additional areas. In addition, NFI will seek out public and private landowners who are willing to allow introductions of Oregon chub into suitable habitat, to increase the number of populations and add resiliency for the species.

"The places where we find chub are also refuge habitat for salmon and trout in winter, productive habitat," Bangs said.

"So if the community continues supporting these kinds of habitat, you will see more trout and salmon. They are a natural part of the river itself. When people are supporting chub, they are supporting trout and salmon."

**This article by Peggy Savage, Editor of the Molalla Pioneer, is reprinted by permission.**



*By ODFW: Ed Sparks holds the first Oregon Chub to be found in the lower Willamette since Eisenhower was president.*

## Kay Patteson named service award winner

Every year your board of directors has a spirited discussion and then takes a vote regarding who among us should be the recipient of the Ryan Morgan Service Award.

Ryan was taken from us as young man in a tragic kayaking accident. During his short years of life, he made a big difference in the lives of troubled youth as a city councilor, track coach, youth mentor and



founding member of the Molalla River Alliance.

It is in his name that we honor the 2013 recipient, Kay Patteson.

Over many years as executive director of Molalla RiverWatch, Kay has organized countless river

clean-ups, trail-building, native plantings and related conservation projects in keeping with the goals of her organization, and ours.

Most recently, Molalla RiverWatch partnered with Weyerhaeuser and a fisheries consultant to place logs in the North Fork of the Molalla River at strategic locations to create hiding, spawning and resting places

for returning steelhead and salmon.

Deservingly, her all-volunteer organization has been designated as the Molalla River Watershed Council by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.

Funds distributed to Molalla RiverWatch by OWEB are being put to effective use enhancing and preserving water quality and habitat in the Molalla River Watershed. For that, the Molalla River Alliance is profoundly grateful.

## BLM making headway on recreation projects

By Adam Milnor

Lead Outdoor Recreation Planner, acting Salem District Bureau of Land Management

The Bureau of Land Management, Salem District continues to work through the implementation of the Molalla River-Table Rock Recreation Area Management Plan with good results.

Cedar Grove and Three Bears Campgrounds are essentially complete. In the fall of 2013, entrance signs at both sites were constructed. Native basalt from nearby quarries was used for the sign bases to match the Molalla River environment.

At Three Bears, a basic water/electric system was installed that will serve a campground host, expected to be in place during the 2014 recreation season.

The Bureau is pursuing opening both facilities to the public for overnight camping in the summer of 2014.

Details such as seasons of use will be announced as they are available.

The BLM will be working closely with Molalla RiverWatch throughout 2014 to close and rehabilitate degraded campsites along the river. An Oregon Department of Environmental Quality grant was secured to purchase plants and prepare areas for revegetation.

Signage throughout the corridor will see improvements throughout the upcoming year. Better wayfinding and rules signage will enhance the recreation experience for first time and returning visitors.

Hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians will notice over one mile of non-motorized trail re-routes

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

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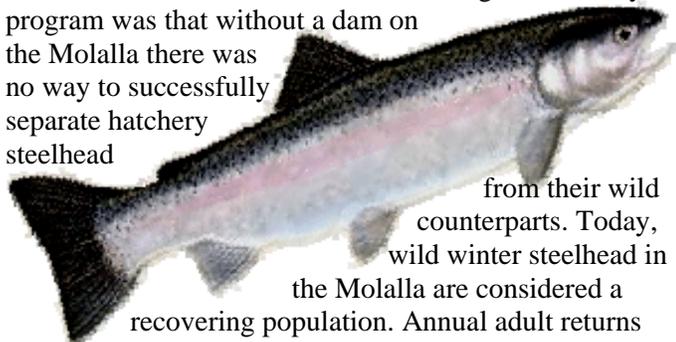
# Molalla River honored for recovery of wild winter steelhead

By Mark Sherwood,  
Program Director  
Native Fish Society

The Northwest is seeing dramatic improvements in the health of many of its rivers and wild fish populations. The best of these are being highlighted in an annual list, *“The 11 Best-Restored Wild Fish Rivers in the Pacific Northwest”* put together by the Native fish Society. Each year, this list celebrates rivers enjoying a healthy resurgence and acknowledges the good work being done by countless organizations and individuals, many of whom are volunteers.

The 2013 list of the “11 Best” includes our own Molalla River, specifically for the recovery of its wild winter steelhead. Their success is attributable to careful stewardship provided by numerous organizations and countless individuals, including the Molalla River Alliance, Molalla RiverWatch, the Native Fish Society and others.

It is estimated historically the Molalla River was home to 77,000 wild winter steelhead. When the summer steelhead hatchery program was identified as a threat, wild winter steelhead numbers were estimated between 100-200 adults total. ODFW’s rationale for ending the hatchery program was that without a dam on the Molalla there was no way to successfully separate hatchery steelhead



from their wild counterparts. Today, wild winter steelhead in the Molalla are considered a recovering population. Annual adult returns compose between 20-30% of the total number of wild steelhead crossing Willamette Falls every winter, or between 1,000-2,000 adult fish annually.

All wild winter steelhead fishing is catch and release with artificial flies and lures only with barbless hooks encouraged by ODFW.

Angling deadlines have been set in the watershed to prevent anglers from disturbing spawning fish or their redds.

The Molalla River has been free of hatchery steelhead since 1998, when ODFW ended its summer steelhead hatchery program in the watershed.

At that point Upper Willamette winter steelhead were undergoing review for protections under the Federal Endangered Species Act due to chronically low returns.

## Molalla Wild Trout

Current fisheries research acknowledges that a healthy resident rainbow trout population is a critical component to healthy wild steelhead runs. In the wild, resident rainbow trout and wild steelhead often spawn together.

A portion of their young will become steelhead, while others will stay behind, living their entire lives in the river. For these reasons, an important part of the story of the recovery of wild steelhead in the Molalla includes its wild rainbow trout populations.

Historically, hatchery trout were planted in the watershed to provide harvest opportunity. However, generous limits resulted in the overfishing of wild trout populations, removing wild trout that were needed as part of steelhead spawning population.

Trout are no longer stocked in the watershed to protect both wild trout and threatened wild steelhead populations. Angling regulations for these fish include selective gear restrictions (artificial fly and lure only) with barbless hooks recommended by ODFW. Trout season is open from May 26 – October 31, with all fishing catch and release.

## Your membership dues mean a lot to the Alliance

The Molalla River Alliance is a wholly self-supporting all-volunteer organization that relies on contributions from its members and grant-writing to sustain its activities.

While we continue to pursue grant opportunities for specific projects, your contribution of \$25 or more enables us to maintain our ongoing activities, including advocacy, education and outreach.

The real value of your membership donation, of course, is the knowledge that you are contributing to the stewardship of the Molalla River—one of Oregon’s treasures.

Please consider giving at a level that you deem appropriate. Make your dues and contributions payable to: Molalla River Alliance, PO Box 727, Molalla, OR 97038.

# Restoration ahead for degraded Molalla campsites

By Kay Patteson & Bill Taylor  
Molalla RiverWatch Watershed Council

Now that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has created two beautiful campground areas, it is time to turn our attention to restoring the riverside areas as the dispersed campsites are closed.

Molalla River Watch (MRW) has secured a \$15,000 Oregon DEQ 319 grant to restore the campsite areas that have been degraded by decades of constant use and vandalism.

The project will restore native riparian vegetation at many of the campsites within the Molalla River Recreation Corridor managed by the BLM in the upper Molalla River Watershed.

The purpose of the riparian restoration is to increase shade and reduce eroded sediment transport to the river by planting native fir and cedar trees. Planting native understory trees and shrubs like ash, maple, red flowering current, Indian plum and snowberry will loosen compacted soil to allow the ground to absorb rain water and reduce runoff into the river.

The plan will restore 1.4 acres of bare compacted soil and cover approximately 800 feet of riverfront. Invasive species weeds will also be removed from the sites. Planting and maintenance of the native vegetation will be performed by Clackamas County youth crews working with Wilderness International, and Molalla River Watch will be recruiting volunteers

for preparation and planting activities this spring. MRW is also working with a local Boy Scout who wants to take over restoration of one or two of the sites for his Eagle Scout project.

The primary partner in this project is the Bureau of Land Management, the agency that manages the Molalla River Corridor. Other partners providing cash or in-kind match are Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Canby Utility Board, and Clackamas County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Some of the restoration work may be done during our SOLVE IT Earth Day Molalla River Cleanup and Corridor Enhancement event on April 26, 2014. Mark your calendars and join other volunteers for this rewarding family event.

## --BLM recreation projects

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completed in 2013 with help from Molalla RiverWatch and Wilderness International. The new trail segments replace muddy, erosion-prone unsustainable trail segments throughout the system.

In 2014, the BLM will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. Table Rock Wilderness is the only designated wilderness in the Salem District and protects 5,786 acres in the upper Molalla watershed.



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