

**South Santiam Watershed Council**  
**Sept 21 2016**

Present: Eric Andersen, Angela Clegg, Norm Kaldahl, Rob Emmons, Scott Marlega, Katie Kohl, Joel Geier, Tyler Pedersen, Lee Peterman, Shirley Jolliff (*Others present but did not sign in.*)

Meeting started at 6pm with welcome and introductions.

Joel Geier was the speaker for the evening. The title of his presentation Birds of the Willamette Valley's oak woodlands: Conservation needs and opportunities. The presentation was packed with information and well received by everyone. There was a discussion of historical habitats and associated birds, habitat and bird community changes since settlement, effects of current land use on birds and important aspects for restoration.

The Willamette valley was historically a spectrum of habitats seamlessly transitioning from prairie to mixed oak/conifer woodlands. Habitats were maintained by the indigenous communities that occupied the Willamette prior to European settlement. Fire was commonly used as a management tool to assist with food production and possibly other reasons. Prairies ranged from wet to dry sites. Wet prairie was found on clay soils which drain poorly. This habitat was wet in winter and dry in summer. Tufted hairgrass and bulbs such as camas would dominate vegetation. Upland prairie was found on drier more well drained sites which didn't have a high water table. Roemer's fescue and various forbs were dominant vegetation type. Oak savannah is characterized by canopy cover of 5 to 25%. Oaks are present, with fire resistant conifer such as Ponderosa pine and Doug fir also present. Blue wild rye was a dominant understory grass. Oak woodland has a canopy cover of 25 to 60% and well developed grass forb understory. Oak and oak/conifer forest has higher canopy cover with shrub and grass understory.

Birds of the prairie and savannah type habitats include: western meadowlark, short eared owl, northern harrier, grasshopper sparrow, streaked horned lark, savannah sparrow, common night hawk and Oregon vesper sparrow.

Birds of the oak woodland include: Cassin's vireo, lazuli bunting, downy woodpecker, western scrub jay, acorn woodpecker, black capped chickadee, purple finch, chipping sparrow, black throated gray warbler, slender billed nuthatch, Hutton's vireo, western wood peewee, lesser gold finch, western bluebird, and bush tit.

Since settlement there has been tremendous change in land use throughout the Willamette Valley. Much of the prairie habitat has been converted to agriculture or urban uses. A lack of fire has allowed open oak savannah to transition to closed woodland. A comparison of historical photos shows a much more open landscape with fewer doug firs than today. As a result of this loss of habitat and possibly other factors there is a declining trend for many prairie and oak woodland birds. Some have been extirpated from the Willamette valley, such as Lewis's woodpecker, logger head shrike and short eared owl.

Future threats to remaining habitat include conversion to other uses such grape vine production, residential development, over topping and shading of remaining oak by larger faster growing doug fir.

There are resources for landowners that are interested in maintaining or resorting this increasingly rare habitat on their property.

- <https://abcbirds.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/05/QuercusGuidePart1.pdf>
- Landowners Guide for Restoring and Managing Oregon White Oak Woodland (Veslely and Tucker)
- Land managers guide to bird habitat and populations in oak ecosystems of Pacific Northwest (Altman and Stephens)

Tyler Pedersen was introduced as the new Santiam Project Manager. Tyler is hired through the North Santiam and Cascade Pacific, but will be doing project management work in the south Santiam. He has many years of experience and has worked at the Coos Watershed Association and the Siuslaw Watershed Council. We are very excited to have Tyler join our team and working to get him up to speed on the area and the projects he will be taking over.

May meeting minutes were approved. The Council met in July for a summer picnic and projects tour, but the May minutes were not reviewed at that time.

The financials for the fiscal year 2015-2016 were presented and approved. The financials for fiscal year to date were also presented and approved. Our contract book keeper will provide a one hour training in November or December on how to read and interpret the financials, as well as important questions the board should ask regarding the financials.

The Council discussed exploring efficiencies with the North Santiam and determining where it makes sense to partner in more depth. For example, we are sharing project management staff. Are there other areas where we should partner more fully. The Meyer Memorial Trust is providing each Council with \$10,000 to evaluate capacity needs. Exploring efficiencies would fall under that category, as well as developing a strategic plan.

Angela Clegg provided an update on the education program. She is seeking input for the Council board on a donation letter and assistance with education events. Salmon Watch was underway and that event always needs volunteers to assist in various capacities. Angela is working on some grants for education.

Eric Andersen gave a projects update from the summer. There were 2 instream projects, a side channel enhancement on Crabtree creek and a large scale tree tipping project on Moose Creek. On Moose Creek 60 full grown Douglas fir (some 45" dbh and over 150ft tall) were tipped into the active stream channel. Root wads, which are critical to the success of instream projects, were included. Some rootwads were over 15ft across. The new Era news paper was onsite for a day to take photos and write an article. Several sites had weed treatment through chemical or mechanical needs.

A general notes session indicates that Lee Peterman and Shirley will have a twilight evening hike on their property on Wednesday Oct 19. Details will be posted to the website.

The next Council meeting is Tuesday, Oct 18 from 3-5pm at the Lebanon Library.