



# Necanicum Watershed Council

## ACTION PLAN

Approved 4/29/15

# Necanicum Watershed Council Action Plan

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# Necanicum Watershed Council

## Action Plan

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Purpose

This document is the Action Plan of the Necanicum Watershed Council (NWC). The NWC is a non-profit and volunteer organization dedicated to the protection, preservation, and enhancement of the Necanicum watershed through leadership, cooperation, and education. The Council's role is to establish and support the implementation of enhancement projects, information, outreach and other suitable activities for the benefit of the fish, reptiles and mammals dependent on a healthy environment. Council board and volunteer membership is broadly representative of those individuals and groups having an interest in the health of the watershed. The Council seeks to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

The Council's mission statement is:

*The Necanicum Watershed Council is a non-profit organization of community volunteers who work to ensure that our watershed is a healthy and functioning ecosystem. Through community outreach and education, landowner partnerships, and on-the-ground habitat development projects, we work to further understanding about the Necanicum Watershed and to make sure it has a sustainable future.*

The Action Plan is based on the Council's goals and mission statement. The Action Plan takes a watershed-wide approach and strives to integrate existing plans and efforts. This Plan is a working document that will be updated and reevaluated as information becomes available.

The NWC depends on voluntary efforts. The Council is not a regulatory or enforcement agency, nor does the Council adopt plans or rules in a legal sense. The Council makes recommendations to decision-makers, landowners, and managers on ways to protect and enhance the watershed resources of the Necanicum Watershed. Implementation of the recommendations in this Action Plan will be completely voluntary. The Council provides a framework for communication, collaboration, and cooperation among its member organizations and others.

The NWC Action Plan is a resource guide to better understand the nature of the Necanicum watershed.

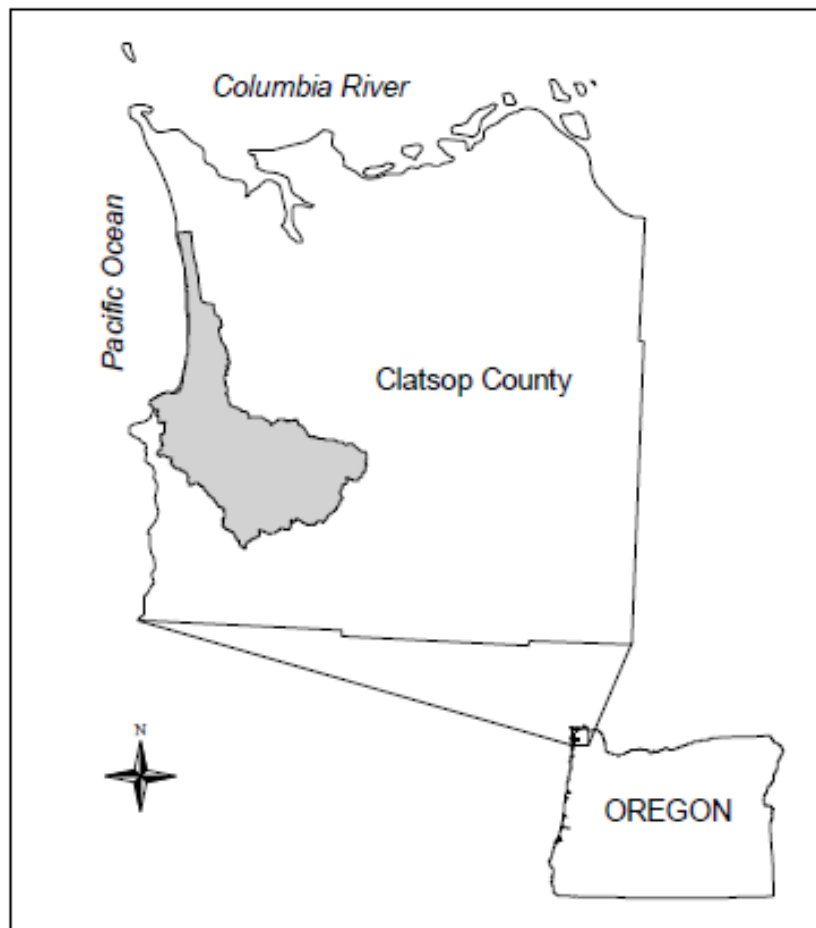
#### 1.2 Background

Like most Pacific Northwest estuaries, the Necanicum River estuary is part of a coastal, temperate, rainforest ecosystem. The estuary is bordered by the city of Seaside, but surrounded by rich forests associated with the Oregon Coast Range. With mean annual precipitation around 80 inches (200 cm) per year in the lower elevations and over 120 inches (300 cm) per year in the higher elevations, the watershed's coniferous forests — trees such as western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), Douglas

fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), true fir (*Abies* spp.), and western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) — cover about 72 percent of the total land area. Hardwood species such as red alder (*Alnus rubra*) and maple (*Acer* spp.) also grow throughout the region, especially as second growth in riparian areas, covering about 11 percent of the watershed.

In the lower elevations of the watershed, forest gives way to wetlands and rich alluvial plains used for agriculture, rural residential housing, and urban development. The Necanicum River watershed drains into the Pacific Ocean at Seaside (Figure 1.1).

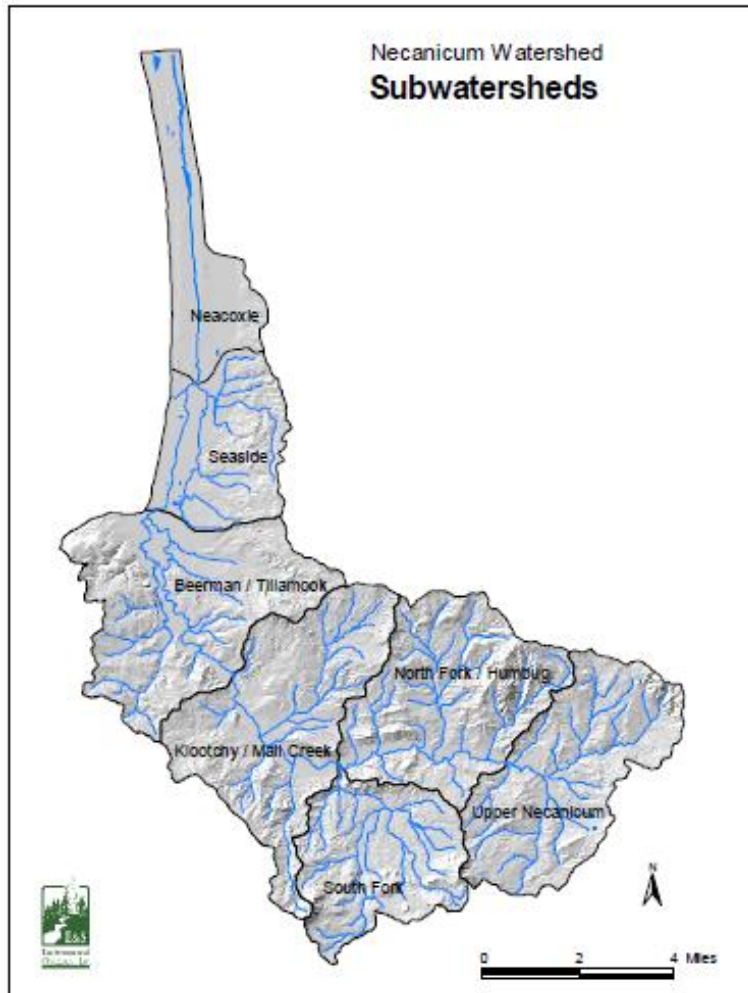
**Necanicum Watershed**



**Figure.1.1**

The Necanicum River mainstem runs approximately 21 miles long and drains approximately 83.7 sq. mi. of land, characterized by steep forested uplands and flat alluvial lowlands. Much of the higher elevations have been used for timber production, and are now on their second or third rotation, or were burned. The lower watershed contains extensive wetland areas and is dominated by urban and rural residential development.

The watershed is divided into seven subwatersheds (Figure 1.2), two of which (Seaside and Neacoxie) are heavily populated. The Neacoxie subwatershed includes extensive areas of rural residential and urban development. The western half of the Seaside subwatershed is largely urban.



**Figure 1.2**

Increasing population, development, and tourism pose potential threats to the Necanicum River Estuary and its associated watershed. Point and nonpoint source pollution from the watershed, shoreline land use, and oil spills continue to threaten the quality of all of Oregon's estuarine waters. Introductions of exotic species, especially *Spartina*, and the risk of increasing water withdrawals also pose risks.

Peak discharge typically occurs during the winter between November and February, however, high flow events can occur as late as June. The watershed has several wild salmonid species including: winter Steelhead, Chinook, Coho, searun and resident cutthroat trout. No current hatcheries are operating in this basin, but several small private hatcheries have operated over the past century.

During the last 150 years land management practices have drastically affected the rivers that coho use. Dike building, logging, water diversions, and road construction significantly reduced the availability of habitat for coho. Road culverts became barriers that restrict use of streams by coho. The loss of large wood from streams reduced the number of pools and the amount of winter rearing habitat for coho.

### 1.3 Watershed Council Membership

The Necanicum Watershed Council operates as an open and inclusive organization. The following is a list of the geographic areas and community interests the council intends to include on its governing body in order to engage a balance of interested and affected persons within the watershed pursuant to ORS 541.910(2). Members of the governing body may represent more than one interest.

This list in no particular order includes, but is not limited to:

- A. Municipalities
  - i. Seaside
  - ii. Gearhart
- B. County
  - i. Clatsop County
  - ii. Clatsop SWCD
- C. State Agencies
  - i. Transportation (ODOT)
  - ii. Fish & Wildlife (ODFW)
  - iii. State Parks (OPRD)
  - iv. Forestry (ODF)
  - v. Water Resources
  - vi. State Lands (DSL)
- D. Private Timber
  - i. Lewis & Clark Timber
  - ii. Weyerhaeuser
- E. North Coast Land Conservancy
- F. Seaside School District
- G. Rural Landowners
- H. Urban Landowners
- I. Sub-Watersheds
- J. Business Community
  - i. Chamber of Commerce
  - ii. Seaside Downtown Development Association
- K. Recreation
  - i. Hunting
  - ii. Fishing
  - iii. Biking
  - iv. Hiking
  - v. Birding
  - vi. Geocaching
- L. Other Non-Profits
  - i. Trout Unlimited (Wild North Coast/Tualatin Valley)
  - ii. Wildlife Center of the North Coast

## **2.0 Development of the Action Plan**

Development of the Action Plan began in April of 2004. The goals of the Council include:

- ❖ Inspire citizens to contribute to the watershed, and/or to feel a sense of ownership
- ❖ Involve younger generations and strive to engage local students
- ❖ Encourage good and proper stewardship
- ❖ Build strong community relationships
- ❖ Offer opportunities to connect with and enjoy the watershed (increase public engagement)
- ❖ Perform actions that provide the greatest benefit for the most species
- ❖ Strive to increase biodiversity
- ❖ Help to provide a healthy and productive ecosystem for all that use the watershed, including salmon, animals, and people that use the watershed
- ❖ Provide a sustainable watershed as well as water source
- ❖ Maintain healthy connections/ecosystem webs
- ❖ Create/maintain/restore healthy communities of and for people/plants and wildlife
- ❖ Restore the watershed to the best we can

To achieve these goals the Council developed preliminary Action Items.

### **2.1 Action Items to Meet Council Goals and Objectives**

The preliminary Action Items identified by the NWC:

- Action #1: Enhance Fish Passage & Habitat
- Action #2: Enhance Riparian Corridors
- Action #3: Enhance Estuary and Wetland Habitat
- Action #4: Provide Educational Opportunities to the Community
- Action #5: Maintain and Improve Institutional Infrastructures

### **3.0 Action Item Tasks**

#### **ACTION 1: ENHANCE FISH PASSAGE & HABITAT**

- Work with landowners to identify and prioritize fish passage barriers in the watershed using watershed assessments & other available documents.
- Remove fish passage barriers for all life history stages of anadromous fish.

#### **ACTION 2: ENHANCE RIPARIAN CORRIDORS**

- Identify priority riparian restoration opportunities based on watershed assessments & other available documents.
- Improve in-stream habitat for aquatic organisms with large wood placement to accrete spawning gravels, restore habitat complexity, and re-connect the stream channel with its flood plain.
- Improve water quality by enhancing native riparian vegetation.
- Assist landowners in identifying where enhanced riparian buffers would improve ecosystem sustainability, and cooperate with them to develop and implement native vegetation planting and release projects at these sites.

#### **ACTION 3: ENHANCE ESTUARY & WETLAND HABITAT**

- Identify priority restoration opportunities based on watershed assessments & other available documents.
- Increase over-winter habitat by creating or enhancing off-channel wetland habitat.
- Assist and work with landowners and businesses in identifying where enhancement projects would improve wetland and estuary sustainability, and cooperate to develop and implement appropriate projects at these sites.

#### **ACTION 4: PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO THE COMMUNITY**

- Secure funding to strengthen outreach to community
- Give presentations about the Council to local service group meetings.
- Provide a resource to the community and City of Seaside.
- Offer educational programs and outreach opportunities for the community, including lecture series, educational events, and hands-on volunteer events.
- Engage with Seaside School District to enhance classroom learning and promote stewardship.

#### **ACTION 5: MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Encourage opportunities for additional training for staff and board members
- Search for and secure diverse operational funding sources.
- Develop partnerships with other organizations in the community that support the mission of the Council.
- Ensure organizational health by transitioning financial grant management to an outside/contracted “Business Manager”.
- Develop relationships with local media outlets, and submit press releases when appropriate.



## **4.0 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The NWC is committed to meaningful and successful restoration activities and to promoting sound management practices in the watershed. Monitoring is an important component in determining the success of a restoration project or management practice and whether the desired results are being achieved.

Monitoring requires a long-term commitment of time and resources. The Council will work with project sponsors to develop a monitoring plan for each action item where appropriate.

## **5.0 Plan Evaluation and Review**

This Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually, at minimum.