

# A CELEBRATION

OF PARTNERSHIPS AND INVESTMENTS IN CONSERVATION  
AND RESTORATION ON OREGON'S CENTRAL COAST







Habitat conservation and restoration happens through the engagement and work of the many people committed to stewardship of their lands, waters, resources and communities. Thank you.







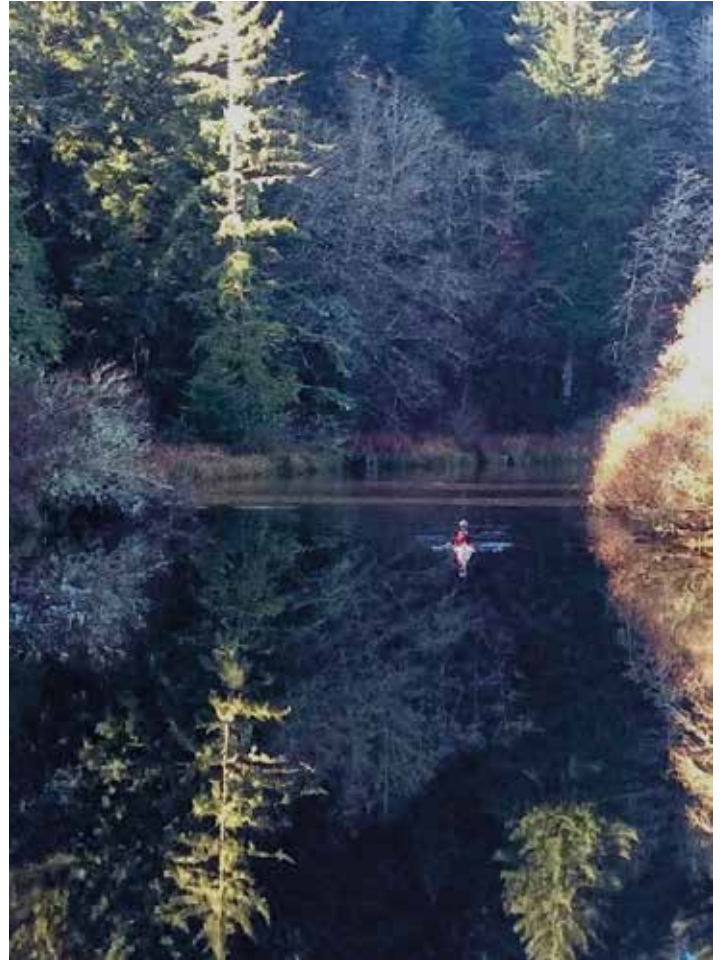
## PROTECTING AND RESTORING OUR LANDS AND WATERS

Over the past 25 years, watershed councils, land trusts, conservation groups, timber companies, private landowners, schools, Federal, Tribal, state and local governments, soil and water conservation districts, agencies and businesses have conserved thousands of acres and have implemented many hundreds of restoration projects on Oregon's central coast.

Over \$102,000,000 from government programs, private foundations, and individual donations has been invested, resulting in improved habitat for salmon and other wildlife species, cool and cleaner water, and beautiful places for recreation and reflection. These investments have also provided local jobs and educational opportunities.

Similarly, local, state, private and federal plans and assessments have been used to prioritize and implement on the ground projects. Use of these plans has added to larger scale stream and watershed benefits. Conserving connected areas adds resilience to the environment.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Conservation Strategy has guided selection of the best sites to conserve and restore habitat for rare or sensitive species such as Coho salmon, Marbled Murrelet, Silver Spot butterfly and Western Lily.



### A TRIBUTE

**This document is a tribute to the collective efforts of the many individuals and groups who have provided the vision, science, passion, skills and work to restore salmon, clean water, forests and streams in the place we call home.**

***Please see <http://midcoastwatersheds.org> for more details. We look forward to continuing to share and celebrate new projects and efforts over the next 25 years.***

*This document was produced by The MidCoast Watersheds Council in 2020 to celebrate their first 25 years of work and the extensive restoration efforts of many other federal, tribal, state, and private groups on the central coast. We thank Paul Engelmeyer of Portland Audubon's Ten Mile Creek Sanctuary, Fran Recht of Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, Esther Lev, Evan Hayduk of The MidCoast Watersheds Council, The Alsea Stewardship Group, and Pacific Digital Works for making this document a reality.*

## PLEASE JOIN IN THESE CONTINUING EFFORTS!

We look forward to supporting and celebrating the new faces and partnerships, conservation and restoration projects and scientific knowledge that will continue to help our natural resources and communities into the future!



### WANT TO HELP?

- Explore and enjoy your local estuaries, streams, parks, and national forest lands.
- Attend presentations and meetings to get to know your local groups' work and learn more about conservation topics.
- Sign up for field trips and volunteer events.
- Provide assistance - use your energy, interests and skills to help local groups or donate to show your support.



**Photo Credits** We thank the photographers for the images in this publication



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- ◇ Zak Shelhamer
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# INVESTMENTS IN CONSERVATION, RESTORATION, EDUCATION & JOBS

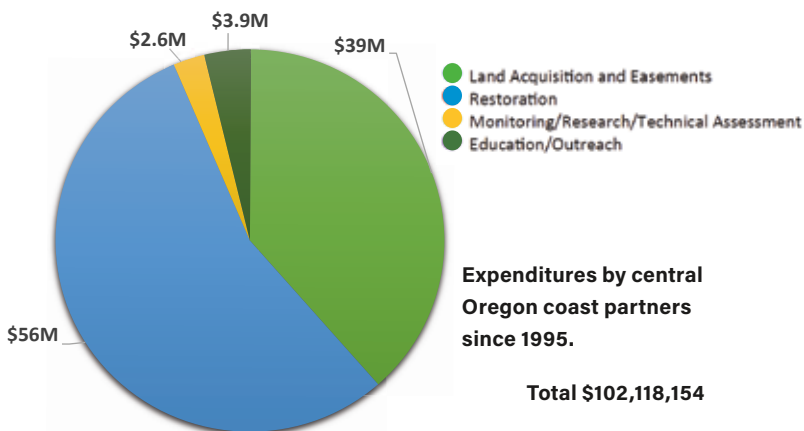
While project goals and success stories are generally about conservation and habitat enhancement for water, fish and wildlife, the work could not be done without collective efforts. To succeed, input from ecologists, surveyors, assessors, equipment operators, helicopter pilots, tree planters, and plant propagators, as well as technical planners, biologists, hydrologists,

engineers and monitors is essential. We also thank all the planting, invasive species removal, seed collection, nursery, and trail volunteers. The expertise and support of agency staff is also critical.

a restoration project. So, the \$56 million restoration work alone, done by the multiple partners over the last 25 years has provided jobs for between 1064 and 1344 people.

### THANK YOU!

A University of Oregon study found that between 19 and 24 jobs are generated per million dollars spent on



Expenditures by central Oregon coast partners since 1995.

Total \$102,118,154



# BUILDING ON EARLIER EFFORTS

## CONSERVATION & RESTORATION ON OREGON'S CENTRAL COAST

For many thousands of years prior to European-American settlement, multiple coastal bands of native people inhabiting the watersheds of the Coast Range between the Salmon and Siuslaw rivers harvested and managed natural resources from the ridge tops to the sea. This included use of fire to maintain meadows for harvest of root plants, reeds and grasses for food, medicine, baskets, weaving and ceremony. As tribal lands were appropriated, exploitation of beaver, oysters, fish, and trees and the draining, diking and filling of wetlands became the common practice, degrading habitat quality, streams, wetlands, and forests.

Awareness of the scale and impacts of these changes to our lands and waters in Oregon and across the United State led to passage of the federal Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act. Additionally, Oregon's land use planning laws have provided the framework for citizens and agencies to watchdog and gain environmental protections. The large-scale federal and state conservation efforts on the

central coast created the foundation for the work undertaken over the past twenty-five years by Mid Coast Watersheds Council. A key partner is Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) which has facilitated watershed council work since 1995 here and around the state.

The Northwest Forest Plan, adopted in 1994, was instrumental in conserving much of the remaining old forest habitats, including on the Siuslaw National Forest. Subsequent enhancements have included thinning younger stands to accelerate mature forest development for spotted owls and Marbled Murrelets. Riparian planting, adding logs to the stream and replacing undersized culverts have improved conditions for coho salmon.

Citizens have worked tirelessly and patiently to add acreage to these federally protected forests. For example, a forty-year citizen effort resulted in saving 186 acres of land near the mouth of Big Creek, south of Yachats from a resort development.

BLM's Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area designated in 1980, is another story of long citizen efforts that conserved coastal



shoreland habitat, large colonies of seabirds and harbor seals, and the peregrine falcons that call the area home.

Over the years, Oregon State Parks and Recreation has conserved land for habitat for rare plants and animals and for recreation. Brian Booth Natural Area is one of the largest examples of park land conserved on the central coast for its habitat importance.



In the 1950s, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) began surveying coastal streams to understand the conditions influencing juvenile salmonid survival. Continued annual monitoring of juvenile and adult populations of salmon and steelhead by ODFW has provided data on population levels and fluctuations and relationships to changing land use, hatchery production, weather and climate.



Additionally, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians has gathered essential information about habitat restoration success including the fish use of restored sites.





# SALMON RIVER WATERSHED

In the early 1960s volunteers organized an effort to protect Cascade Head from development, resulting in The Nature Conservancy acquiring the headlands in 1966. The surrounding forest land owned by the USFS received its own protection in 1974 with a Congressional designation as a Scenic-Research Area to maintain and enhance its scenic and ecological qualities. In 1975, the area was also designated by the United Nations as a Biosphere Reserve. In 2014 an offshore marine reserve was established to protect marine biodiversity. Land stewardship is provided from adjacent landowners, individuals, organizations and agencies.

Results from Oregon Silverspot Butterfly inventories and conservation and restoration planning and action by The Nature Conservancy and U.S. Forest Service have worked to increase violet and nectar plant presence for caterpillars and butterflies in the upland meadows.

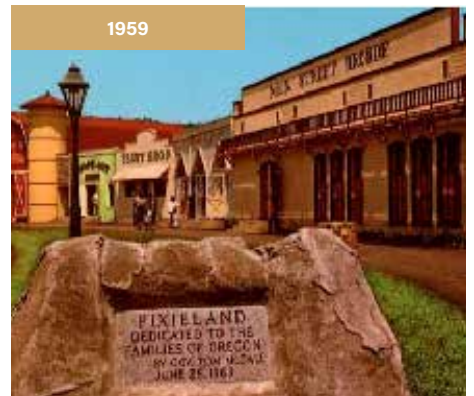
In parallel with these early conservation efforts, the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology was established to expand awareness of the relationships between art, ecology, and humanity, through hosting artists and scientists studying, working and teaching together.

With the uplands largely protected, attention turned to restoring the estuary and its associated wetlands to a “natural estuarine system free from man’s developments”. This goal was based on the role that estuaries and their tidal marshes, swamps, and channels play in providing vital habitat for salmon and hundreds of other species.

However, most of the Salmon River estuary had already been diked for decades to provide land for agriculture, cattle grazing, a trailer park and an amusement park. Like many other conservation success stories, it took 40 years of work led by U.S. Forest Service and assisted by many others, with work on many separate small and large projects between 1978 and 2018, to achieve this vision.

The work included removing pavement, structures, dikes and undersized culverts that restricted tidal flow, the filling of drainage ditches and the re-creation of natural channels and native plant

communities. Today, 636 acres of high value tidal marshes and channels have been restored.



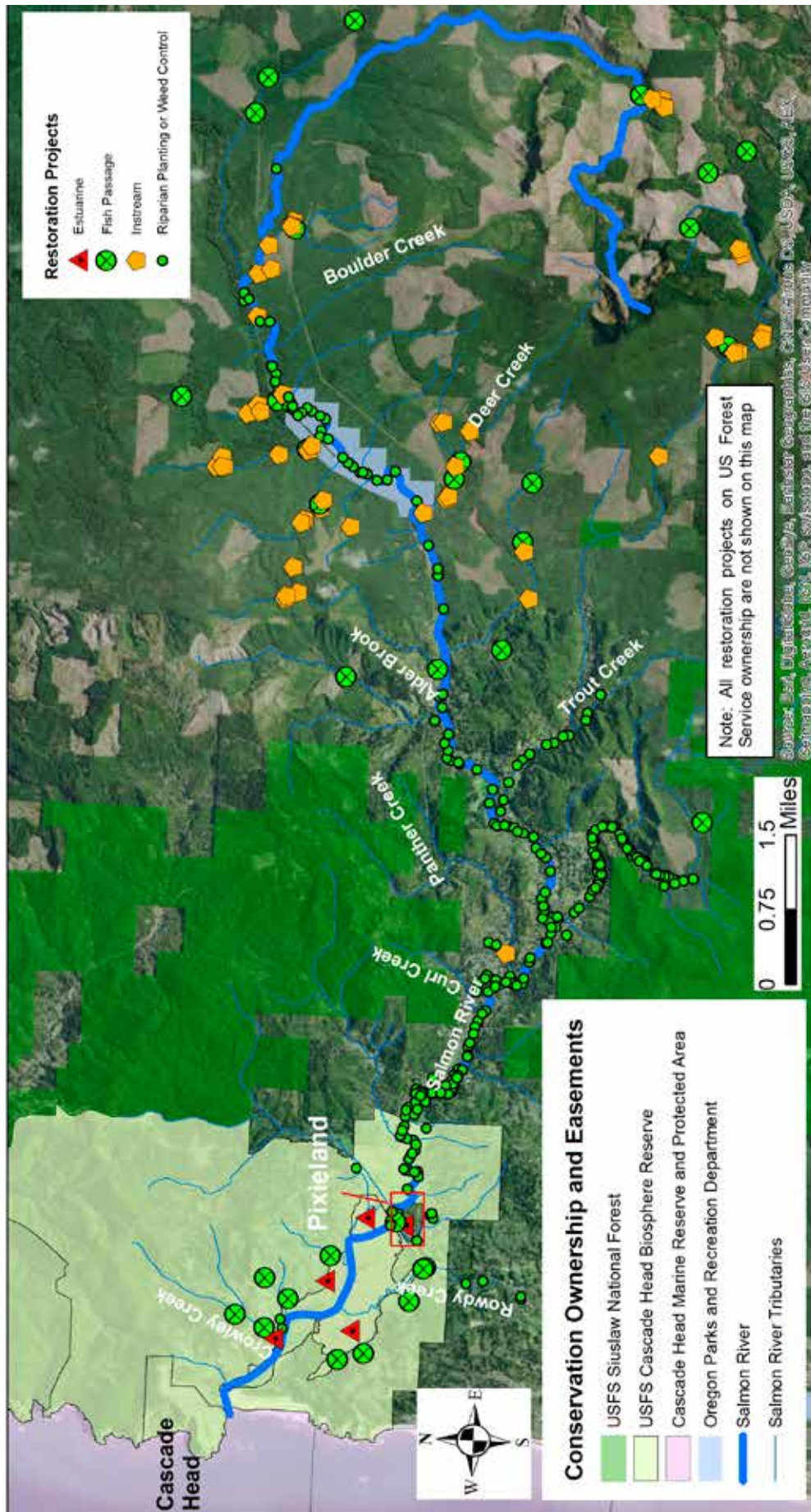
**New Discoveries!**

As Oregon's first estuary restoration project, extensive research was conducted by Oregon Division of State Lands, Oregon State University, NMFS, ODFW, and USFS. The results have informed goals and designs for later restoration efforts, including in the Siletz, Yaquina, and Alsea. NMFS and ODFW research has shown that

some juvenile Coho salmon use estuaries extensively and those that do tend to survive proportionately better in the ocean before coming back upriver as adult fish. Survival rates for Coho using the estuary is 20-35% greater than fish that do not use the estuary (and 50-75% higher for Chinook salmon).



**Salmon River Watershed- Conservation and Restoration Areas**





# SILETZ WATERSHED

**The Siletz Bay National Wildlife Refuge** (*Siletz NWR*) lies near the mouth of Siletz Bay. It is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as one of six wildlife refuges that form the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. This Complex, supports a rich diversity of wildlife habitats including coastal rocks, reefs, and islands essential for seabirds, forested and grass-covered headlands, estuaries, and freshwater marshes.

The donation of 46 acres of salt marsh near Lincoln City in 1989 became the catalyst for the establishment of the Siletz NWR in 1991. Over time, the USFWS has acquired, 8,830 acres of land and 230 acres of easements from willing landowners, which has allowed cooperative work to restore and enhance marsh and upland habitats for fish, wildlife, and public recreation.

Over the years, a variety of small and large tidal marsh restoration projects have been undertaken to allow salt

water to flow into the marsh. Other actions include filling 1200 feet of artificial ditches, planting native trees and shrubs for salmon habitat. In total about 96 acres of tidal marsh have been restored to health. In 2016 at Alder Island, a new visitor parking area, information kiosk, trailhead, fishing access, and kayak launch area opened to the public.

### Restoration Work Highlights

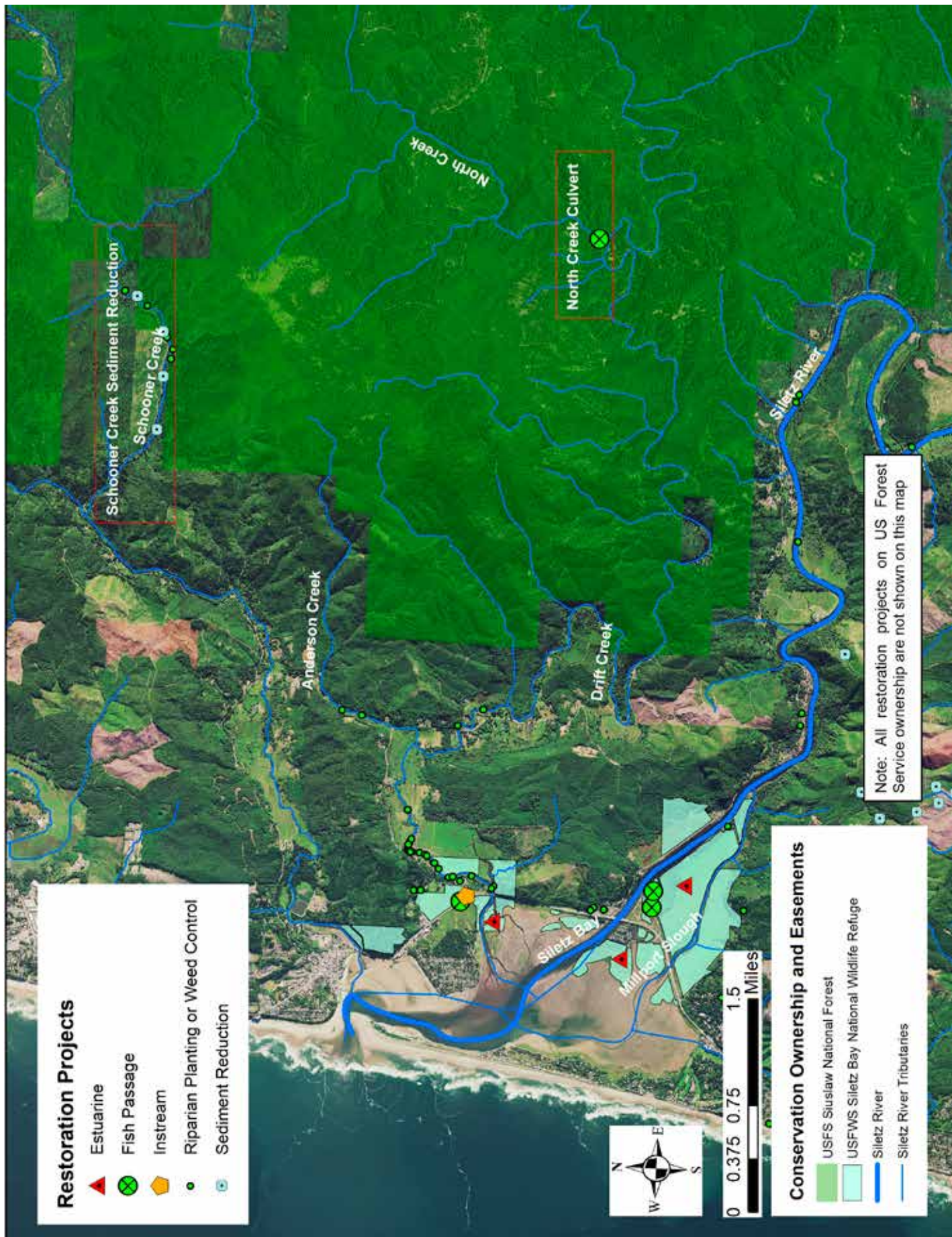
*North Creek fish passage project:* North Creek is a beautiful cold stream that joins Drift Creek to flow into the Siletz River. However, an undersized road culvert prevented Chinook and Coho salmon and other fish from accessing 16 miles of the stream in the largely undisturbed upper watershed, managed by the USFS for old growth forest conditions. In 2019, the USFS and the MidCoast Watersheds Council completed a \$1.05 million dollar project installing a 50 foot wide, 24 foot tall culvert under the road to allow fish access as well as allowing logs and gravel to pass through the culvert to create healthy downstream conditions. Within months of the project's installation, salmon were spawning in the project area.

*Schooner Creek sediment reduction project:* Schooner Creek is both an important salmon stream and Lincoln City's primary drinking water source. Sediment from road fill, poorly designed road drainage and culverts and landslides degraded the quality of

the drinking water making treatment costs more expensive and constraining fish use. The Salmon Drift Creek Watersheds Council, USFS, Lincoln City and Lincoln County worked together to assess problems, and design and implement solutions for the problematic 4.6 miles of the road system. Work began with assessments in 2017 and was completed in 2020 at a cost of \$100,000.



# Siletz River Watershed- Conservation and Restoration Areas





## YAQUINA WATERSHED

The 252-square mile Yaquina watershed provides habitat for thirty species of concern and includes an estuary that supports commercial oyster operations and provides nursery grounds for the salmon and crab that fuel the local fishing fleet.

However, the ecological and economic benefits of the estuary were long under-valued. A 1950's oil spill, identification of several superfund sites in the 1970s and a 2005 ship breaking proposal helped catalyze community interest in conserving and enhancing the Yaquina Estuary.

In response, the MidCoast Watersheds Council (MCWC) began assessments of estuary conservation and restoration opportunities in 1999. As a result, the first two restoration projects occurred in the 2000s, totaling about 70 acres. They were done in a partnership between MCWC, Green Diamond Timber and Georgia Pacific. Those assessments in conjunction

with The Wetlands Conservancy's (TWC)'s 2011 Yaquina estuary Conservation Atlas have resulted in the permanent protection by TWC of 358 acres of habitat in the Lower Yaquina Preserve and 89 acres in the Upper Yaquina Preserve. Other large scale conservation efforts include the Yakona Nature Preserve and the Van Eck Forest.

In 2017, TWC implemented estuary enhancements in Poole Slough, under a mitigation agreement between ODFW and ODOT for fish passage impacts to streams from the construction of the new highway segment between Pioneer Mountain and Eddyville. Fish passage was improved and habitat quality enhanced through placement of large wood, removal of a road and dike, and creation of new tidal channels.

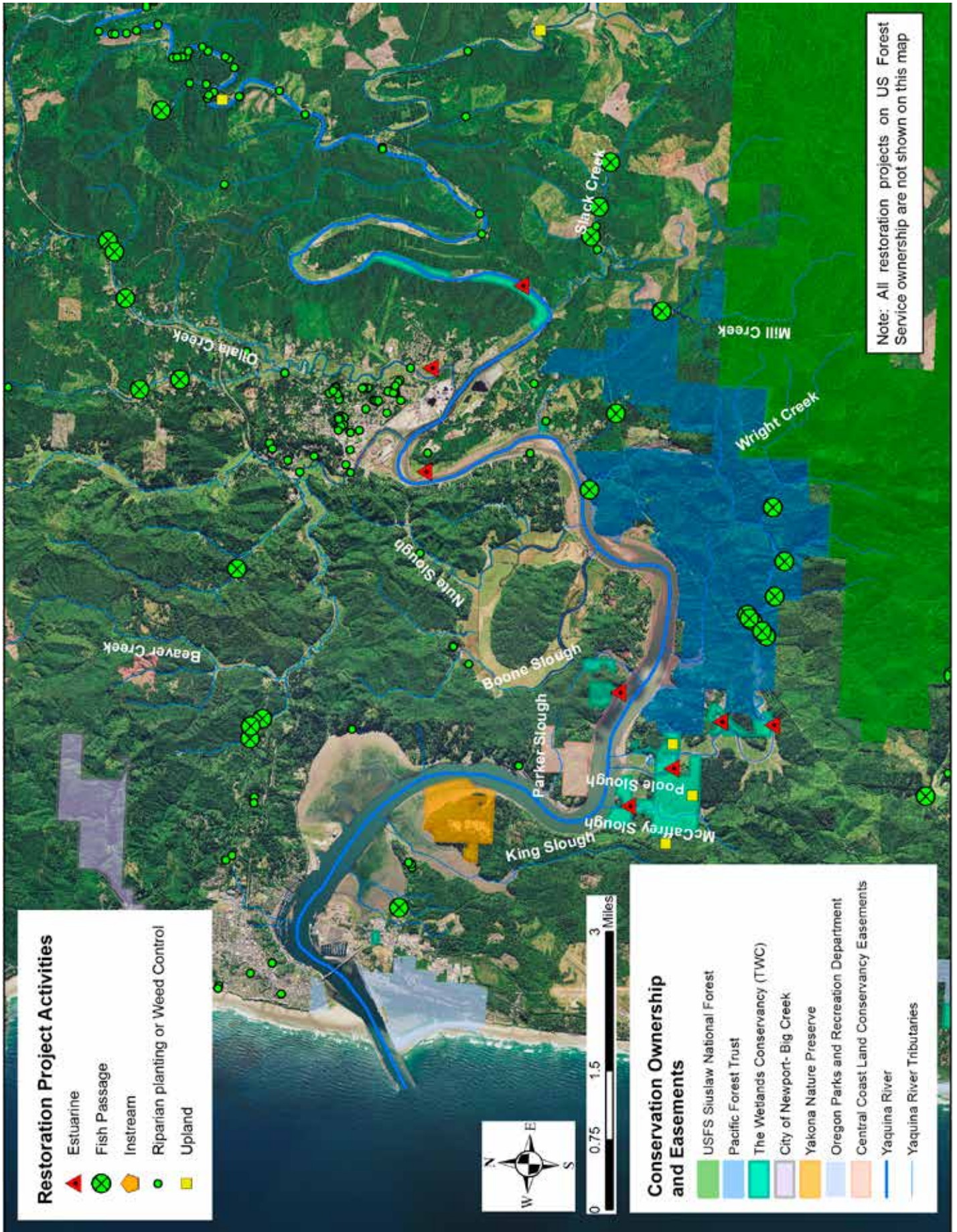
Further tidal marsh and eelgrass restoration work was done in the estuary as mitigation for projects by the Ports of Toledo and Newport. Additionally, Oregon State University and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians have been pursuing native oyster restoration projects to restore this habitat-forming species. Native oysters once were luxury items shipped to restaurants in San Francisco

and New York in the late 1800s. These oysters were overharvested and mostly gone by 1915.

In the upper watershed, culvert repairs that allowed salmon passage upstream to necessary stream habitat, large wood placements, riparian protection and native plantings and road repairs were also undertaken by timber companies, the MCWC, Pacific Forest Trust, the Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District, and others.



# Yaquina River Watershed- Conservation and Restoration Areas





# BEAVER CREEK WATERSHED

The 32,500-acre Beaver Creek basin is largely undeveloped, and supports forestry, agriculture, and recreation. About 40% of the watershed is currently managed for conservation. This includes 11,000 acres of the upper watershed managed by the Siuslaw National Forest for old growth forest conditions.

Wetland and habitat conservation efforts in the basin started in 1996 with a phone call from a local Beaver Creek resident. That call to The Wetlands Conservancy led to their acquisition of the 77-acre Matilda Happ Preserve.

Fourteen years later, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) acquired an additional 400 acres next to this preserve and the adjoining Ona Beach State park. This established the Brian Booth State Natural Area, the 2010 Park of the Year.

Additional acquisitions and easements of old growth forest to protect endangered Marbled Murrelet habitat by OPRD and TWC have also

occurred. As a result, the lower Beaver Creek conservation area now protects a total of 1647 acres of estuary, wetland, riparian and lowland mature forest habitats, and provides low-impact recreational access to the beach, the estuary, and the river. The large complex of fresh water wetlands supports a diversity of migratory and resident birds, waterfowl, and is a critical habitat component for salmon populations in the basin. The adjacent uplands support a range of habitats from meadows to young Sitka spruce and western hemlock forests to older forests suitable for nesting by Marbled Murrelets.

**Restoration:**

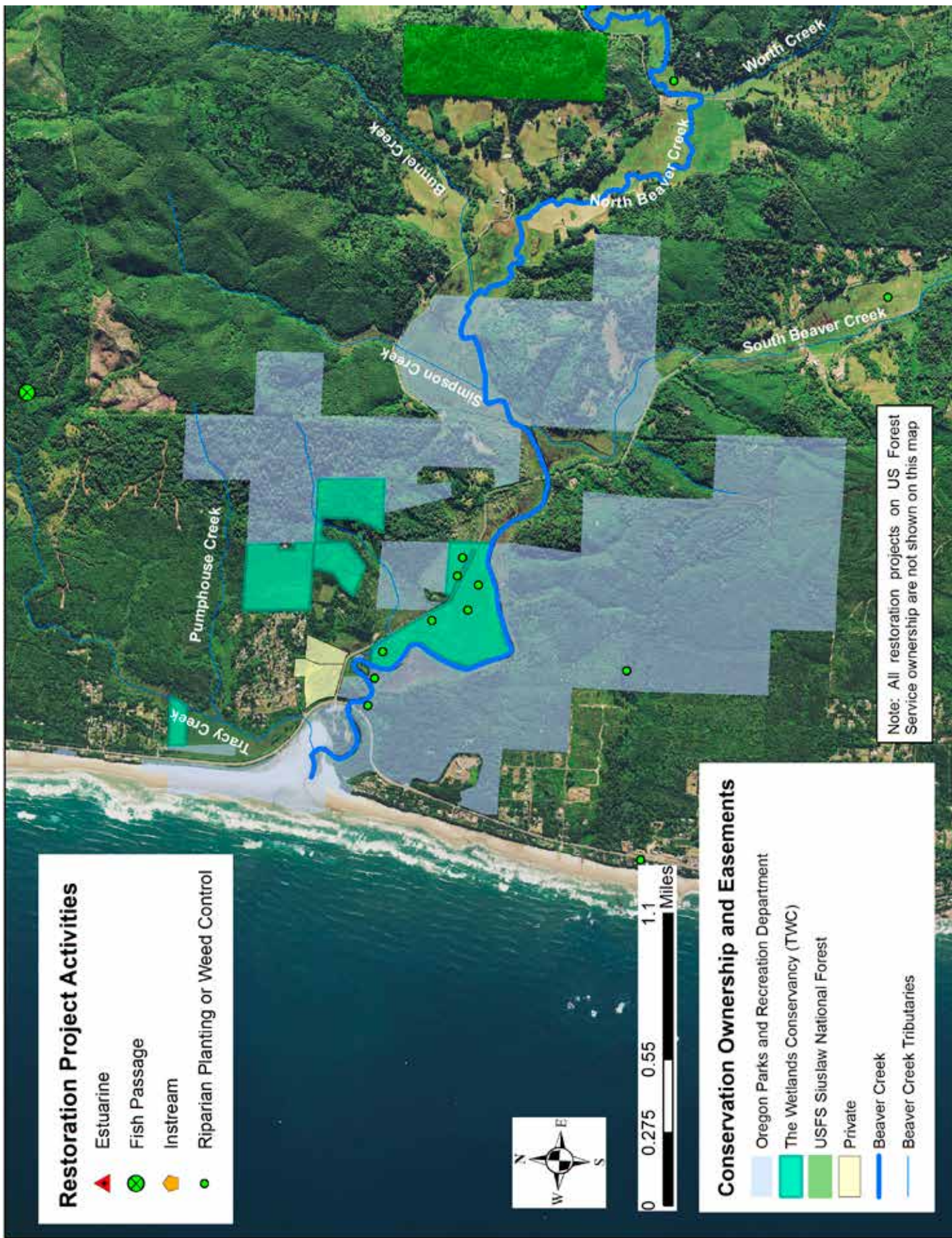
Enhancement efforts by a variety of organizations and individuals have removed yellow flag iris from the wetlands and planted native shrubs and trees along agricultural ditches and channels.

OPRD and the MCWC have established a native plant nursery at Beaver Creek and 13 private property owners are engaged with the MCWC in a coordinated effort to plant 20,000 native trees and shrubs along 60 acres of stream and in the floodplain, working to lower the temperature of the stream and provide cover so that fish will have good shade, food, and refuge.





# Lower Beaver Creek Watershed- Conservation and Restoration Areas





## LOWER ALSEA WATERSHED

The Alsea River drains a watershed of about 470 square miles containing landscapes that range from heavily forested hillsides to open pastures along the lowlands and riverbanks to an open water inlet and estuary fringed by nearly 700 acres of wetlands. The upland habitats in the Alsea watershed support a range of habitats from meadows to young Sitka spruce/western hemlock forests to older forests suitable for nesting by the rare Marbled Murrelet. Forested areas are owned by federal and private timber companies.

Once supporting a prolific commercial salmon fishery, a dramatic decline in coho salmon coastwide

has resulted in curtailed sport and commercial fishing. This reduction in salmon abundance is severe. Alsea Bay alone once supported 5 fish canneries. Alsea Bay has also been identified as an Important Bird Area for shorebirds, Brown Pelicans, and Greater Yellowlegs

**Conservation:** In 2003, the Siuslaw National Forest in partnership with Western Rivers Conservancy secured 1,200 acres of upland and tidal marsh habitat in Lower Drift Creek. The NW Forest Plan directs the forest to manage for older growth forest conditions. Pacific Forest Trust's adjacent forest land acquisitions in combination with The Wetlands Conservancy's 241 acre ownerships in Starr Creek and Bayview Oxbow secure connectivity between the Drift Creek Wilderness Area and the Alsea estuary.

**Restoration:** In 2006, USFS, Alsea Watershed Council and partners

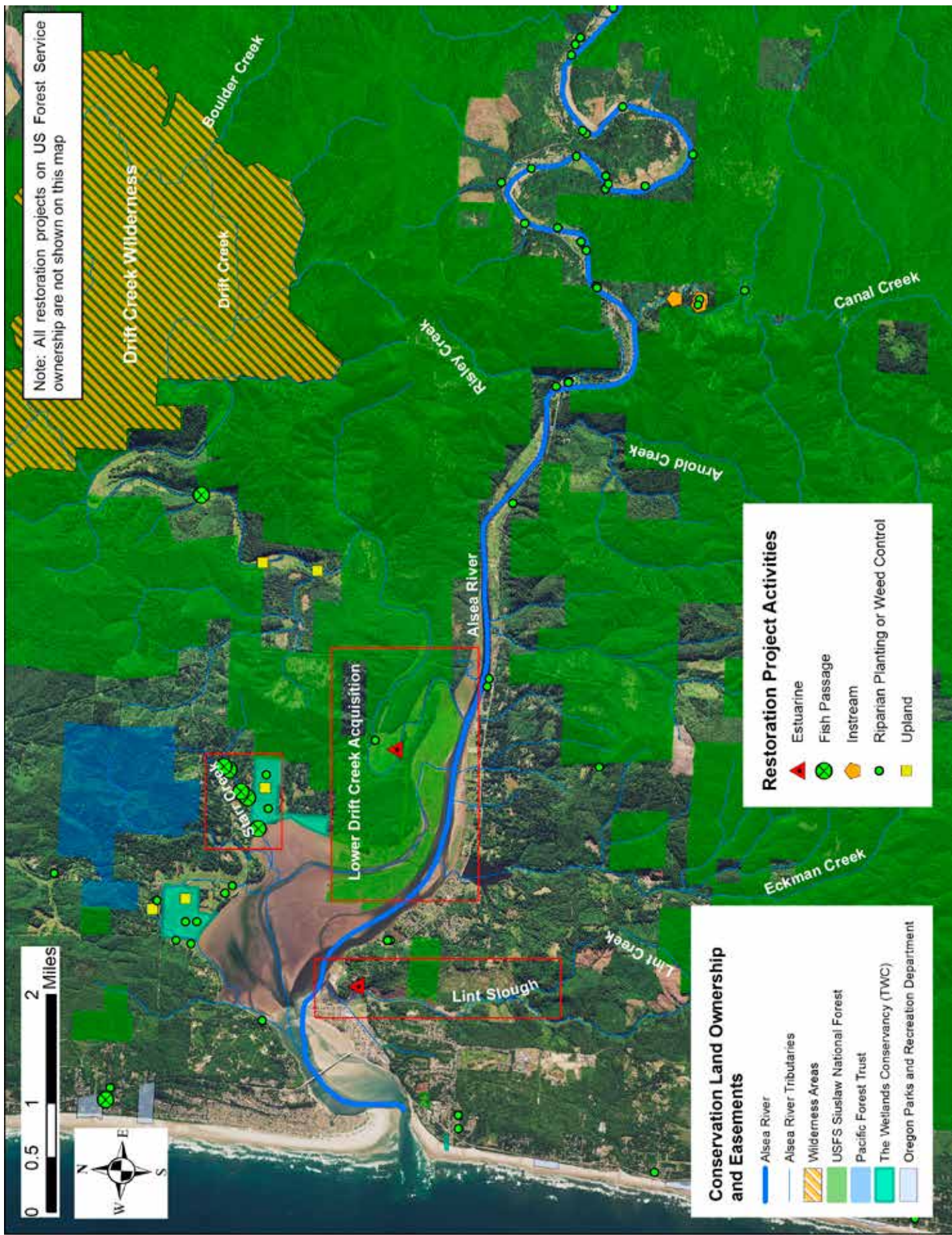
breached 1600 feet of dike and restored hydrology to 82 acres of former marsh habitat.

Large scale, multi-year restoration projects were completed in Lint Slough by ODFW and the MCWC in 2010. This work allows its marshes to become a productive natural fish nursery, after earlier and failed alterations to create a hatchery.

A Starr Creek culvert replacement by Natural Resources Conservation Service and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and an instream enhancement project by MCWC improved spawning habitat conditions resulting in return of coho salmon for the first time in 25 years.



# Alesea River Watershed- Conservation and Restoration Areas





# CAPE PERPETUA/ TEN MILE CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

**The Ten Mile Creek watershed** within the Cape Perpetua area near Yachats encompasses approximately 20 thousand acres. The watershed is primarily managed by the Siuslaw National Forest and is located between the Cummins and Rock Creek wilderness areas. This area is part of the largest contiguous coastal spruce/hemlock temperate rain forest left in the lower Pacific Northwest.

Portland Audubon Society has led many successful efforts to protect and restore critical habitat for multiple endangered species. This work includes efforts within the 116 acre Ten Mile Creek Sanctuary and surrounding conservation properties.

ODFW has recognized and managed Ten Mile Creek and surrounding streams (Cummins, Rock, Bob, and Cape Creeks) as an important haven

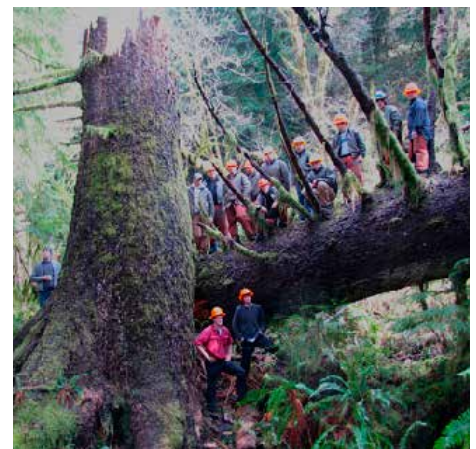
for production of wild salmonids. Young steelhead and cutthroat trout, endangered coho and chinook salmon rear in these streams. Pacific lamprey and endangered eulachon also use these coastal creeks.

**The Cummins Creek/Ten Mile/Rock Creek** areas total approximately 80,000 acres. They are the centerpiece of a designated Globally Significant Bird Area, an international designation for a conserved site which differs in character, habitat or importance from the surrounding habitat.

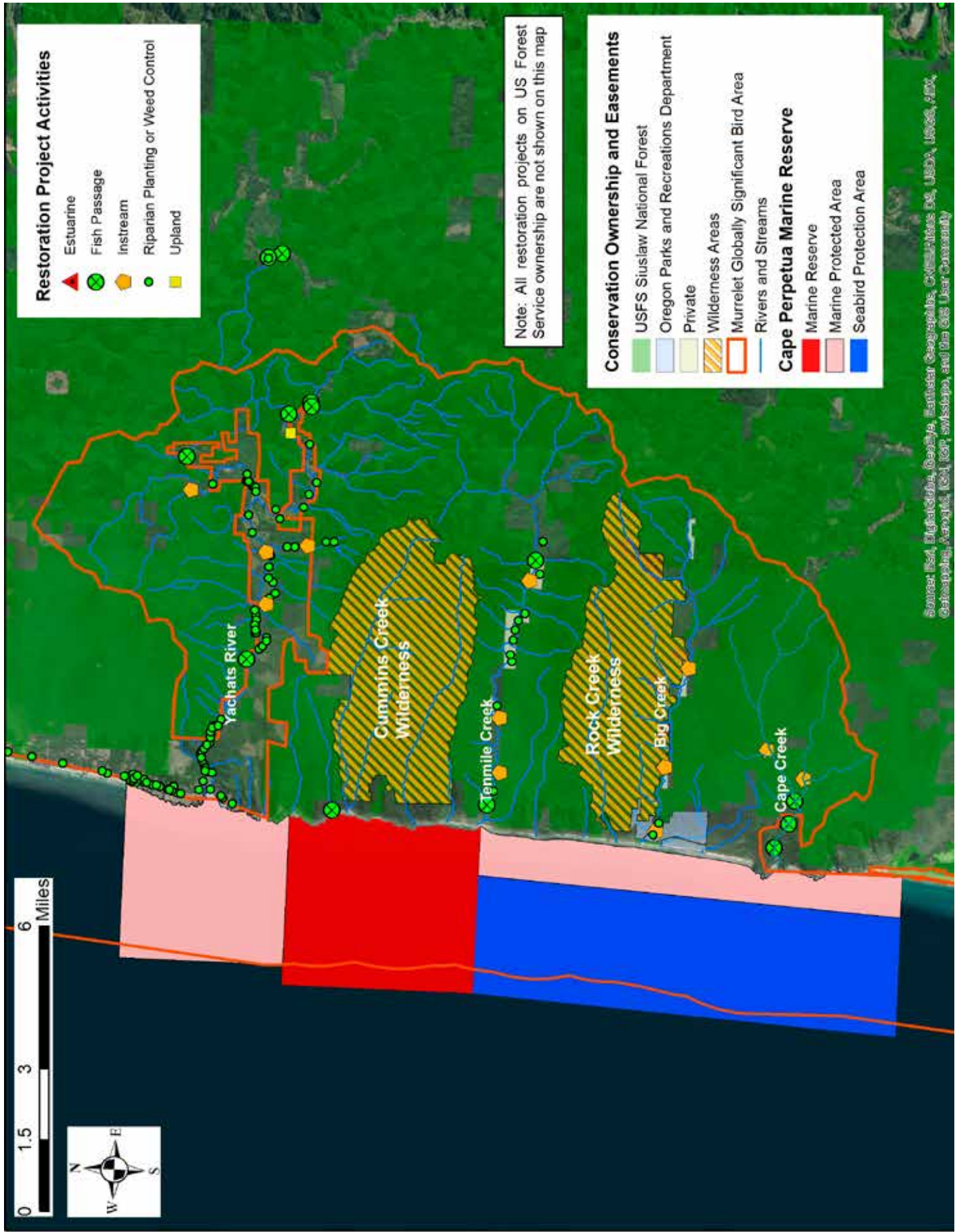
Portland Audubon’s work with private landowners and foundations and the work of Oregon State Parks and the USFS has led to the protection and restoration of an additional 1,500 acres of forest and stream habitat for multiple endangered species including the Marbled Murrelet. This seabird has been both federally and state listed as threatened since the mid 1990’s.

The corresponding Marine Reserve off Cape Perpetua is included in the Globally Significant Bird Area designation since Marbled Murrelets spend most of their life at sea, except for nesting in old growth forests where there are thick mats of moss on large branches for eggs to be laid. The adult birds catch ocean prey such

as sand lance and herring and fly up to 60 miles back to the forest to feed their young.



# Cape Perpetua/ Ten Mile Creek- Conservation and Restoration Areas



# A SALUTE TO OUR COLLECTIVE WORK

*The commitment to and stewardship of the landscape we call home has involved a lot of individuals and groups, built new collaborations and fostered long time friendships. It is truly an impressive legacy to leave for those who will lead efforts into the future*

## FUNDERS

- ◇ Finlay Anderson and Amy Turnball
- ◇ Benton County
- ◇ Jane and Frank Boyden
- ◇ Cascade Pacific Resource Conservation & Development
- ◇ City of Lincoln City
- ◇ Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians
- ◇ Cooperating Landowners
- ◇ Dike and Dierdre Dame
- ◇ Philip Darney and Uta Landy
- ◇ Joanne Daschel
- ◇ Devils Lake Water Improvement District
- ◇ Diack Ecology Education Fund
- ◇ Jack and Laura Doyle
- ◇ Drinking Water Providers Partnership
- ◇ Jennie Sue Dunn-Dixon
- ◇ Holly Endersby and Scott Stouder
- ◇ Federal Highways Administration
- ◇ Fish America Foundation
- ◇ Fisheries Restoration and Enhancement Board
- ◇ For the Sake of the Salmon
- ◇ Sandy Gruber
- ◇ Mary Beth Guerena
- ◇ Hampton Tree Farms
- ◇ Hire the Fisher Program
- ◇ Kathleen Holt
- ◇ Alan and Dorcas Holzapfel
- ◇ John and Diane Howieson
- ◇ Mac and Gay Jervey
- ◇ Shannon Johnson
- ◇ Kathy Keller Jones and Barry Jones
- ◇ Jubitz Foundation
- ◇ Cheryl and Paul Katen
- ◇ Diana Lett
- ◇ Lincoln County Commission
- ◇ Lincoln Land Legacy Project
- ◇ John Marshall
- ◇ Gloria McDougal and Mike Smithers
- ◇ David Powell
- ◇ Mountain Rose Herbs
- ◇ National Audubon Society
- ◇ National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)
- ◇ National Forest Foundation (NFF)
- ◇ National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
- ◇ Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- ◇ Northwest Oregon Restoration Partnership (NORP)
- ◇ NOAA Restoration Center
- ◇ Oregon Community Foundation
- ◇ Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)
- ◇ Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)
- ◇ Oregon Dept of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- ◇ Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)
- ◇ Oregon Ecology Education Fund
- ◇ Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD)
- ◇ Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)
- ◇ Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation
- ◇ Gale Ousele
- ◇ George Page
- ◇ Fran Recht
- ◇ Joan Robinson
- ◇ Douglas Schadd
- ◇ John Sherman
- ◇ Shotpouch Creek Foundation
- ◇ Doug Skidmore and Heidi Beebe
- ◇ Sheryl Smith
- ◇ James Stannard Foundation
- ◇ Jubitz Foundation
- ◇ Peter Tronquet
- ◇ Royal Rangers Oregon Council
- ◇ The Timber Company
- ◇ U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- ◇ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- ◇ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- ◇ U.S. Forest Service-Siuslaw National Forest (USFS)
- ◇ Wild Salmon Center
- ◇ Marjorie Wolfe, Wolf Water Resources
- ◇ Worthy Garden Club
- ◇ Martha and Tim Wylder

## SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- ◇ Biosurveys, Inc.
- ◇ Boise Cascade
- ◇ Career Tech Charter High School
- ◇ Coastal Cutthroat Consulting
- ◇ ESA Associates
- ◇ Greenpoint Consulting
- ◇ Institute for Applied Ecology
- ◇ National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS)
- ◇ Oregon Coast Community College
- ◇ Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)
- ◇ Oregon Division of State Lands (DSL)
- ◇ Oregon State University (OSU)
- ◇ Plum Creek Timber
- ◇ River Design Group
- ◇ South Slough Estuarine Research Reserve
- ◇ Si Simenstad
- ◇ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- ◇ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- ◇ U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- ◇ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- ◇ University of Washington Wetlands Ecosystem Team
- ◇ Weyerhaeuser
- ◇ Wolf Water Resources
- ◇ Hull Oakes Company
- ◇ Knottworks Construction
- ◇ Lane County Public Works
- ◇ Lincoln County Public Works
- ◇ Lincoln County Soil and Water Conservation District
- ◇ Lincoln County School District
- ◇ Paul Lindsey
- ◇ Luckini Construction
- ◇ Miami Timber
- ◇ MidCoast Watersheds Council
- ◇ Mountain Rose Herbs
- ◇ Quinn Murk
- ◇ Native Fish Society
- ◇ Natural Resource Conservation Service
- ◇ Natural Resource Crews
- ◇ North Lincoln Sanitary Service
- ◇ Oregon Coast Community Forest Association
- ◇ Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- ◇ Oregon Department of Forestry
- ◇ Oregon Parks and Recreation
- ◇ Oregon State Bridge Construction
- ◇ Oregon State Police
- ◇ Oregon State University Community Engagement & Leadership
- ◇ Oregon State University Extension Service
- ◇ Pacific Forest Trust
- ◇ Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
- ◇ Plum Creek Timber
- ◇ Port of Alsea
- ◇ Port of Newport
- ◇ Port of Toledo
- ◇ Road and Driveway
- ◇ Salmon Drift Creek Watersheds Council
- ◇ Seal Rock Water District
- ◇ Siletz Valley School
- ◇ Siletz Watershed Council
- ◇ Simpson Resources Company
- ◇ SOLVE
- ◇ Starker Forests
- ◇ Ten Mile Creek Sanctuary of Portland Audubon Society
- ◇ The Nature Conservancy
- ◇ The Wetlands Conservancy
- ◇ Thompson Disposal
- ◇ Toledo Department of Parks and Recreation
- ◇ Trask Design and Construction
- ◇ Trask Consulting
- ◇ Trout Unlimited- Bluebacks Chapter
- ◇ U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- ◇ U.S. Forest Service- Siuslaw National Forest
- ◇ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- ◇ Van Eck Forest Trust
- ◇ View the Future
- ◇ Weyerhaeuser
- ◇ Wilderness Volunteers
- ◇ Yakona Preserve
- ◇ Yaquina Birder and Naturalists
- ◇ You da Man

## IMPLEMENTERS

- ◇ 350 Oregon Coast
- ◇ Alsea School District
- ◇ Alsea Stewardship Group
- ◇ Alsea Watershed Council
- ◇ Angell Job Corps- forestry crews
- ◇ Beaver Creek Community
- ◇ Benton County
- ◇ Benton Soil and Water Conservation District
- ◇ Biosurveys, Inc. Steve Trask
- ◇ Boise Cascade/Forest Capital Partners
- ◇ Central Coast Land Conservancy
- ◇ City of Lincoln City
- ◇ City of Newport
- ◇ City of Siletz
- ◇ City of Toledo
- ◇ City of Waldport
- ◇ Columbia Helicopter Company
- ◇ Community Services Consortium
- ◇ Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians
- ◇ Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw Indians
- ◇ Dahl Disposal Service
- ◇ Don Davis
- ◇ Drift Creek Organizational Camp
- ◇ Eddyville Charter School
- ◇ Georgia-Pacific
- ◇ Green Diamond Timber
- ◇ Hancock Forest Management
- ◇ Hatfield Marine Science Center
- ◇ Hebo Stewardship Group
- ◇ Hire the Fisher crew
- ◇ Oregon State University Community Engagement & Leadership
- ◇ Oregon State University Extension Service
- ◇ Pacific Forest Trust
- ◇ Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
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- ◇ Seal Rock Water District
- ◇ Siletz Valley School
- ◇ Siletz Watershed Council
- ◇ Simpson Resources Company
- ◇ SOLVE
- ◇ Starker Forests
- ◇ Ten Mile Creek Sanctuary of Portland Audubon Society
- ◇ The Nature Conservancy
- ◇ The Wetlands Conservancy
- ◇ Thompson Disposal
- ◇ Toledo Department of Parks and Recreation
- ◇ Trask Design and Construction
- ◇ Trask Consulting
- ◇ Trout Unlimited- Bluebacks Chapter
- ◇ U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- ◇ U.S. Forest Service- Siuslaw National Forest
- ◇ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- ◇ Van Eck Forest Trust
- ◇ View the Future
- ◇ Weyerhaeuser
- ◇ Wilderness Volunteers
- ◇ Yakona Preserve
- ◇ Yaquina Birder and Naturalists
- ◇ You da Man

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 Wardlow Collen  
 Willer  
 Deb Wilkins  
 David Wilson Derek  
 Wilson  
 Rose Wilson  
 Zack Wilson  
 Kip Wood  
 Tim Wood  
 John Wooley  
 Liu Xin  
 Ron Yechout  
 Annie Young-Mathews

We apologize for any  
 inadvertent omissions of  
 names of individuals or  
 groups  
 Please contact the  
 MidCoast Watersheds  
 Council with corrections  
 for our online version.