

# The Rogue River Watershed Council

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020

### PART 1 – INTRODUCTION

#### BACKGROUND

The Rogue River Watershed Council's (RRWC) watershed region faces challenges that require innovative solutions. Habitat loss, invasive species, stream-side development and other factors put watershed health at risk. Engaging people of all ages and levels of education and working with organizations and landowners to conserve and improve streams and the land that surrounds them is vital to the communities and the wildlife that depend on water.

The RRWC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that works to restore instream, streamside, and terrestrial habitat, improve water quality, and encourage community members to become stewards of the Rogue River and its tributaries. The RRWC works in an area of approximately 1.6 million acres from the headwaters near Crater Lake to Mule Creek in the Wild and Scenic portion of the Rogue and encompasses the towns of Grants Pass, Merlin, Shady Cove, Eagle Point, Butte Falls, Central Point, Jacksonville, Phoenix, Talent, Medford, and Ashland and several other smaller communities. RRWC communicates and engages community members about what our streams need in order to remain healthy. Monitoring and science-based decision making is critical to the RRWC's restoration planning and action.

This document contains updated mission, vision and values statement, and goals and strategies for the future. This report also includes a funding plan for the coming five years that supports the work of the watershed.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL FOCUS

**RRWC Mission:** Stewardship of the Rogue River watershed through restoration, education and community involvement.

**RRWC Vision:** A healthy, productive and beautiful Rogue River watershed.

**RRWC Values:** Long-term watershed health is dependent on collaborative and practical science-based solutions that benefit aquatic ecosystems and the people who use watershed resources while respecting property rights. The RRWC strives to have integrity through fiscal responsibility, professional expertise, and the passion for work done.

#### PLANNING PROCESS

This strategic plan was prepared under the direction of the board with help from staff and a consultant. The consultant facilitated several workshops to analyze strengths and weaknesses

(See SWOT analysis in Appendix A), collect input on priorities and directions for the organization and to produce draft text for the Strategic Plan. The draft text from the consultant was expanded with additional work of board members and staff. Comments were then solicited from all board members and the plan was finalized and approved.

The plan is intended to set direction for the RRWC with a 5-year planning horizon. To guide short-term actions with more focus and detail it will be necessary to prepare annual work plans. Preparation of the annual work plans is a staff function. The RRWC Board will approve the annual work plans.

The strategic plan should be updated in the event that major new directions for the organization become evident. In the absence of major new directions the strategic plan should be reviewed and updated at least every three years.

**Board Participants in Planning:** Chair - Ray Tharp, Vice Chair - Terry Ruitter, Treasurer - Bela Toledo, Secretary - Bob Jones, and Directors Paula Trudeau, Pete Gonzalves, Paul Ancell, Tom Dover, Dave Hussell, Dave Grosjacques, Jennie Morgan, Rachel Werling, Chuck Huntington, and Stan Dean (JSWCD liaison)

**Staff Participants:** Executive Director - Brian Barr, Administrative Assistant - Anna Johnson, Program Managers - Donna Chickering and Sarah Sauter.

## **PART 2 – GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY AND GOVERNANCE**

The success of the RRWC is dependent on the capabilities of the staff and board and the tools they need to work productively. Accordingly, the following goals and strategies have been identified to advance the organization.

#### **Board Capabilities**

- **Goal:** RRWC will maintain a board with a wide range of skill sets and board members that remain actively engaged.

#### **Key Strategies:**

**ORG-1.** Determine representation that is most advantageous to achieve RRWC's mission. The RRWC Board should reflect the communities and have connections within the RRWC area. Additional areas of expertise to also be considered include non-profit management, accounting, legal, environmental policy, business relations, government relations, environmental science, environmental regulations, communications, and fundraising.

**ORG-2.** Recruit board members who fill voids in expertise.

**ORG-3.** Develop and implement a board training program, with a focus on

outreach and fundraising but also including marketing, event planning and implementation, and governance.

**ORG-4.** Maintain a committee structure that is efficient and effective. Use committee participation to resolve issues and set direction.

**ORG-5.** Use board members in ways that expand the capability of the organization and are complementary with the roles and responsibilities of staff.

### **Focus of the Organization**

- **Goal:** RRWC will remain focused on activities that are highly effective for improving conditions in the Rogue River watershed. The work should dovetail with the work and capabilities of other organizations with related purposes.

#### **Key Strategies:**

**ORG-6.** Conduct a niche analysis of collaborators and partners.

**ORG-7.** Develop a plan to manage partner overlap and to assure partnerships remain effective.

**ORG-8.** Prepare annual work plans.

**ORG-9.** Review and update the Strategic Plan periodically.

### **Working Groups**

- **Goal:** RWCC will keep its working groups active and energized so that they can make positive contributions to the organization. They should provide input on direction for the overall organization, provide resources on program activities, and serve as communication vehicles.

#### **Key Strategies:**

**ORG-10.** Periodically solicit input from working groups on RRWC plans and priorities.

**ORG-11.** Support working group meetings by having RRWC staff occasionally attend to facilitate the exchange of information.

**ORG-12.** Support working group meetings by periodically providing speakers that will draw attendees to meetings.

### **Volunteers**

- **Goal:** RWCC will regularly recruit and use volunteers to support its programs and build community and connections.

#### **Key Strategies:**

**ORG-13.** Assess needs and opportunities for volunteers and determine how volunteers can best be used.

**ORG-14.** Develop policies regarding the use of volunteers. Make sure to

address liability and safety.

**ORG-15.** Implement volunteer programs that include recruitment, training, and oversight.

### **Fiscal Responsibility**

- **Goal:** Maintain a healthy financial position and accurate records that are easy to review and understand.

#### **Key Strategies:**

**ORG-16.** Bring the accounting and bookkeeping functions in-house.

**ORG-17.** Develop efficient internal fiscal processes for contracts.

**ORG-18.** Complete an internal audit annually.

**ORG-19.** Complete external audit following first full fiscal year after moving bookkeeping and other accounting functions internal to RRWC.

### **Professional Staff**

- **Goal:** Recruit, develop, and retain excellent staff.

#### **Key strategies:**

**ORG-20.** Develop a long-term staffing plan aligned with projected RRWC needs. It should include staffing levels, expertise, compensation, and employee development.

**ORG-21.** Build a staff training program and train staff to meet program and project needs. Include training on building community involvement (grass roots organizing) and fundraising.

### **Performance Management**

- **Goal:** Develop and use key metrics to effectively guide the work of the RRWC.

#### **Key Strategies:**

**ORG-22.** Train staff and board on developing and using performance metrics.

**ORG-23.** Select and define performance metrics for each program area and for administration and financial health of the organization.

**ORG-24.** Set targets for each metric.

**ORG-25.** Establish reporting systems for performance metrics.

## **FUNDING**

Developing a consistent stream of funding to cover the full range of costs needed to run the organization and make meaningful improvements to the health of the watershed is critical to

the success of the RRWC. It is anticipated that the bulk of the funding will need to come through grants and major donors; however, smaller dollar sources of funding through a “friends program” are still important.

- **Goal:** Develop funding streams that will sustain the organization over five years and into the future with recognition that sources of funding will need to change over time. Make sure the funding originates from a diversity of sources to minimize financial risk.

**Key Strategies:**

- FND-1.** Identify critical gaps in future funding.
- FND-2.** Research and analyze potential future sources of funding with a focus on
- FND-3.** determining the most efficient actions and approaches.
- FND-4.** Prepare a pro forma statement to guide funding efforts. The statement should include both sources of funding and anticipated expenses.
- FND-5.** Establish plans for securing future funding and implement them.
- FND-6.** Develop a membership program for Friends of the Watershed (Individuals, Families, Businesses) with different levels of support.
- FND-7.** Provide sponsorship opportunities for special events or programs.
- FND-8.** Develop processes for advertising, holding raffles and selling merchandise such as hats, shirts, dry bags, and water bottles.
- FND-9.** Hold special fundraising events such as a salmon spawning float.
- FND-10.** Maintain strong relationship with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and other, current funding partners.
- FND-11.** Develop additional local and regional funding partnerships.
- FND-12.** Achieve recognition with the Combined Federal Campaign.

## **HABITAT RESTORATION PROGRAM**

Habitat restoration is a high priority program. It is considered a core activity to accomplishing the mission of the RRWC because it will produce real improvements in watershed health.

Native aquatic animals (as well as those that depend on streamside habitats) are largely declining throughout the Rogue River Basin. There are a variety of reasons, but chief among them are poor stream habitat conditions that are degraded from 150 years of development concentrated along those portions of streams that historically provided the best conditions for salmon, steelhead, and Pacific Lamprey spawning and rearing. Development and natural resource management (and extraction) have created conditions that alter the natural processes of streams and streamside areas in negative ways.

- **Goal:** Improve habitat conditions in streams (including floodplains) to support greater production and survival of desirable aquatic and semi-aquatic plants and animals (particularly native fish such as Chinook and Coho Salmon, Pacific Lamprey, Rainbow Trout (including steelhead) and Cutthroat Trout).

**Key Strategies:**

**HAB-1.** Develop a Technical Advisory Team to guide restoration project development. Make sure the team has a diversity of technical backgrounds, is knowledgeable of the RRWC's geographic areas and represents key governmental and private interests.

**HAB-2.** Focus on fish passage projects to improve ability of adult Pacific Lamprey, and adult and juvenile salmon, steelhead, and resident fish to migrate or move easily upstream.

**HAB-3.** Focus on projects that address floodplain interaction and in-stream habitat complexity to create and sustain stream habitat conditions that support the wide variety of aquatic organisms present (and thriving) in a healthy watershed. This includes projects that provide high flow refuge areas for resident and overwintering fish species.

**HAB-4.** Focus on projects that provide summer temperature refuge for cool water aquatic species including invertebrates.

**HAB-5.** Conduct landowner outreach to encourage participation in projects.

- **Goal:** In association with restoration projects, take actions that attract positive attention from community members, area businesses and local governments, partners, and potential funders.

**Key Strategies:**

**HAB-6.** With all projects, consider opportunities to include outreach and education opportunities (see the section on the Outreach and Education Program).

## **WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

Water Quality is a high priority program. It is considered a core activity to accomplishing the mission of the RRWC because it will produce real improvements in watershed health.

Water quality conditions in the Rogue River and many of its tributaries do not support beneficial uses such as aquatic life, drinking water, irrigation, and recreation. Water quality impairments include elevated water temperature, changes in pH outside the optimal range, reduced dissolved oxygen, increased nutrient and bacteria loading, and increased turbidity. Human activities that impair water quality include reduction of riparian vegetation, water withdrawals, alteration of stream banks, and runoff from agriculture, forestry activities, urban areas, and roads. It is important to recognize that water quality and flow are interrelated. Reduced stream flows are unable to dilute pollutants, lead to higher water temperatures, limit in-stream habitat, and affect flow-dependent recreation.

- **Goal:** Improve water quality conditions in streams to support the range of beneficial uses of the waterways.

**Key Strategies:**

**WQI-1.** Develop water quality improvement plans.

**WQI-2.** Focus on projects that address surface water temperature in stream reaches with high-value salmon populations. This includes lowering ambient temperatures through important stretches of the waterways as well as protecting local cool water temperature refuges. The primary tool to address water temperature is streamside forest restoration. However, projects that address flow and sources of high temperature water may also be worth pursuing.

**WQI-3.** Focus on projects that improve drinking water quality. This includes projects that address nitrates, bacteria, turbidity, and toxic pollutants. An example is exclusion fencing for livestock that will address a variety of important water quality parameters. These efforts should concentrate on designated surface water – drinking water supply areas (DWSAs). Because RRWC is not positioned to take the lead on many types of complex water quality projects, efforts should be through partnerships and supporting other organizations that should appropriately lead the projects.

**WQI-4.** Focus on projects that address flow such as flow augmentation, upstream retention, and securing in-stream water rights. In cases where RRWC does not have the technical skill set or the capacity to negotiate instream flow deals and apply for instream flow leases or transfers, we will engage partners to assist in completing the required work to complete the project.

**WQI-5.** Focus on projects that address concentrated sources of pollution with the understanding that concentrated sources may provide opportunity for the most significant improvements.

**WQI-6.** In selecting and implementing projects consider opportunities for improving multiple water quality parameters of concern at the same time.

**WQI-7.** Where possible, develop large projects that address long reaches (0.5 miles) in high-value salmon streams, smaller projects will be considered based on ecological, social, and organizational benefits. For example, a small, urban stream project may have a minimal impact on water temperature; but high visibility, partnership interest, and volunteer recruitment may make the project a valuable component of RRWC's project portfolio.

- **Goal:** Develop regional capacity and capability for implementing streamside forest restoration projects.

**Key Strategies:**

**WQI-8.** Develop internal standards for implementing, maintaining and monitoring streamside forest restoration projects. Include restoration practices that are non-toxic.

**WQI-9.** Develop internal administrative documents to support streamside forest restoration projects including a landowner agreement template, and a request for proposal template.

**WQI-10.** Encourage local contractors to become competent in implementing

streamside restoration projects.

- **Goal:** In association with water quality projects take actions that attract positive attention from community members, area businesses and local governments, partners, and potential funders.

**Key Strategy:**

**WQI-11.** With all projects, consider opportunities to include outreach and education opportunities. (See the Strategic Plan section on the Outreach and Education Program.)

## **MONITORING PROGRAM**

A monitoring program is needed to define current conditions in the watershed and to measure the level of success projects have on water quality, habitat quality, and ecosystem populations. In successful, marginally successful, and failed restoration work, monitoring will provide information to help staff and consultants develop, design, and implement more effective projects in the future. A monitoring program is also critical for framing success stories in communications with the public, potential private business partners, and donors.

- **Goal:** Develop and implement a general monitoring program that spans the area covered by the RRWC. Initial target resources to monitor include flow, water quality, habitat quality, and aquatic populations.

**Key Strategies:**

**MON-1.** Assemble a Technical Advisory Team to guide monitoring program development.

**MON-2.** Develop the program with consideration of options for funding and staffing the program, baseline / control data, scope of the monitoring efforts, interrelationships with other monitoring programs, and data management.

- **Goal:** Develop and implement a restoration project effectiveness monitoring program for all restoration projects. Effectiveness monitoring efforts will demonstrate the degree to which a restoration activity achieved the desired outcomes.

**Key Strategies:**

**MON-3.** Identify key monitoring parameters, and data collection protocols (before and after project) for projects led by RRWC.

**MON-4.** Incorporate monitoring plans into projects.

- **Goal:** Engage the community in monitoring activities to support education and outreach efforts.

**Key Strategies:**

- MON-5.** Conduct juvenile fish surveys with a team of volunteers.
- MON-6.** Conduct physical habitat surveys through community groups and organizations.
- MON-7.** Establish a volunteer water quality monitoring effort.

## **OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM**

The outreach and education program will provide opportunities that initiate and increase awareness, interest, concern, knowledge, motivation, and engagement regarding the Rogue River watershed in order to improve water quality and instream aquatic habitat. The education component (transmitting knowledge) of this program is important, but the outreach component (garnering participation and action) is even more critical to success of the RRWC in terms of recruiting landowners for on-the-ground projects and motivating individuals to become volunteers for and supporters of the organization's efforts.

Within this program there are two goals: one related to outreach and one related to education. Many of the individual strategies listed under one goal will also be supportive of the other. Furthermore, many of the strategies can be most effectively implemented through working together with partner organizations.

In selecting outreach and education activities in which to participate, consideration should be given to relevancy to mission, effectiveness of meeting goals and objectives of the program, organizational capacity, widespread geographic representation, and fundraising potential.

- **Goal:** Engage members of the community to volunteer and participate in projects (particularly on-the-ground projects), and grow the friends of the watershed supporter base. (Outreach Component).

**Key Strategies:**

- OED-1.** Identify and engage critical landowners for project participation.
- OED-2.** Identify opportunities for community engagement on all RRWC projects.
- OED-3.** Host work parties and volunteer events that complement restoration, monitoring, and water quality programs' work.

- **Goal:** Increase awareness in the community of the RRWC and watershed health issues (Education Component).

**Key Strategies:**

- OED-4.** Develop informational brochures, flyers, newsletters, signs, and other written documents that can be used to connect with the general public.
- OED-5.** Regularly submit news releases to the media to share successes, raise awareness, and advertise events.

**OED-6.** Develop tours, demonstration sites, workshops, and certificate programs to educate citizenry about watershed science, issues, and best management practices.

**OED-7.** Increase public awareness and support through staff presentations to area service groups and organizations.

**OED-8.** Participate in area festivals and events.

**OED-9.** Utilize social media (website, Facebook, etc.) to reach newer and younger audiences.

## **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

While each of the four program areas are described separately, together they embody the output or “deliverables” of the RRWC. As such they need to be managed in unison and function together.

- **Goal:** Make sure that each of the four program areas support each other and are effective.

### **Key Strategies:**

**PMG-1.** Make sure that program activities are distributed geographically throughout the RRWC area while recognizing that some types of activities will be more suited to some regions than others.

**PMG-2.** Develop prioritization process that can be used in each program area and across programs to select the most important work on which to focus.

**PMG-3.** Plan and implement program activities with partners with common interests.

## Appendix A

### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

The following analysis of internal and external factors that affect programs and the organization was completed as part of board strategic planning workshops in 2016. It is intended as background information.

#### Strengths and Opportunities *(in no particular order)*

- The RRWC has passionate, engaged, and knowledgeable staff with diverse skills. The staff is willing to create and implement important programs that forward the mission of the organization. The Board of Directors (many served on the boards of the organizations that merged to form RRWC) are engaged, active and skillful professionals in their own right—ready and able to lead the direction of the organization for years to come. RRWC is fortunate to have:
- Centrally located facilities
- A watershed council that is recognized for its programming and scale of region that it manages
- Increased opportunities resulting from the larger region and prospective resources
- A collaborative relationship with some regional and local partners
- Local businesses that may be interested in sponsorship opportunities
- Large water users that may be sources of funding
- Schools, colleges, and universities that are partners in natural resource education and research for students and teachers
- Board members willing to speak to organizations on behalf of the RRWC and its mission
- Programs that may raise funds through fees for service, offer local tours and information sessions about clean water and stream and river restoration

#### Weaknesses and Threats *(in no particular order)*

- Since the merger, RRWC has worked hard to identify and focus energy on staff and board roles and responsibilities in order to get work completed. RRWC Board has made a new commitment to pursue private funds and more public foundation dollars as State investments will decrease. The organization remains vulnerable without a diversified and balanced funding portfolio. Some challenges include:
- Developing and maintaining clear priorities and focus
- Niche focus among other organizations
- Marketing strategy (need marketing study)
- Continued merger transitions for staff and board
- The recruitment and use of volunteers
- Many landowners need education about water and land practices, and need to

- understand and work with regulatory issues
- Developers that understand and can mitigate the impacts of increase in population and developed land on complex natural water systems