

Waters In Common

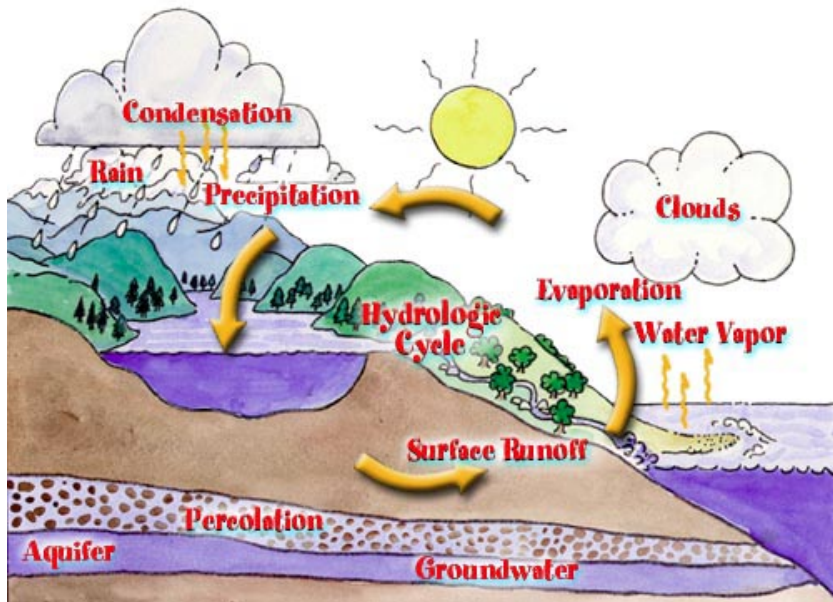


Waters in Common is a newsletter of the Siuslaw Estuary Partnership, a collaborative effort to protect and improve water quality and fish and wildlife habitat in the lower Siuslaw River Watershed. This first issue informs you about the project, key water quality and fish and wildlife facts, and ways you can be involved in protecting the environment we share.



What is a Watershed?

A watershed is a geographic area in which all sources of water - lakes, rivers, estuaries, wetlands, streams, and ground water - drain to a common surface water body. All watersheds ultimately drain to the ocean. The project study area encompasses the Siuslaw River Estuary, the lower portion of the Siuslaw River watershed. The Estuary is the portion of the river where freshwater mixes with sea-water, extending from the river mouth almost to Mapleton.



Water, Water Everywhere

Groundwater and surface water are interconnected. It is often difficult to separate the two because they "feed" each other. This is why contaminants in one can spread to the other. The best way to understand this is by the water (hydrologic) cycle. This movement of water between the earth and the atmosphere through evaporation, precipitation (rain), infiltration and runoff is continuous. In Florence, sandy soils allow rain to quickly soak into the ground. During wet winter months, the groundwater level rises so that it actually becomes surface water in places, creating wetlands and seasonal lakes.

Your Water Source

Our area has two sources of drinking water - the North Florence Sole Source Dunal Aquifer and Clear Lake. The aquifer supplies groundwater to the City of Florence and residents outside the city with private wells. Clear Lake provides water to customers of Heceta Water District. These two drinking water sources are inter-connected. Likewise, these sources inter-connect with other area lakes, area creeks, wetlands, the Siuslaw Estuary, and the ocean. It is this "interconnectedness" that caused the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1987 to designate the North Florence Dunal Aquifer "sole source," because the aquifer is the only drinking water source for a majority of the people. In fact, it is the only federally designated sole source aquifer in the State of Oregon.

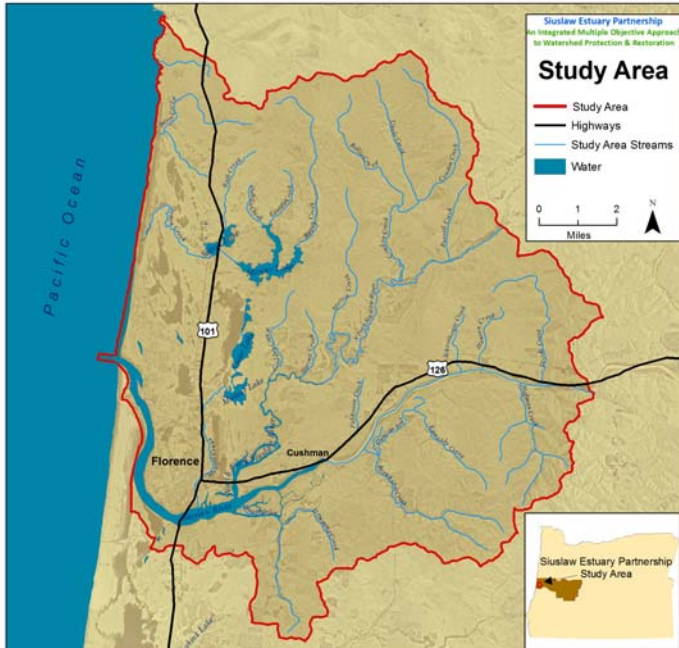
What's Good for Fish is Good for Florence

The health of the local economy is tied to the health of the environment. Commercial and recreational fishing, boating, tourism, industry, commerce, and all of daily life depend on high quality air, land, and water resources.



Project Purpose and Elements

The Siuslaw Estuary Partnership's purpose is to protect and improve water quality and fish and wildlife habitat in the lower Siuslaw River Watershed for generations to come. "Guiding Principles" will be agreed upon which will contain environmental targets for each of the six Project Elements described below.



Management Practices for stormwater. Monitoring will occur for groundwater, Clear Lake, Munsel and Ackerley Creeks, the estuary, the North Fork, and the ocean/beach. This integrated monitoring program will provide critical information on water flow and volume; it will test for potential contaminants; and it will respond to threats before they result in contamination of a drinking water source. The Interdisciplinary Team and consulting hydrogeologists will guide development and implementation of this project element.

4. Wetland and Riparian Area Protection:

The existing inventory of wetlands and riparian areas will be updated; wetlands functions will be assessed to determine what benefits they provide; and measures will be adopted to protect the significant wetlands that protect water quality, store rain water, and/or provide fish and wildlife habitat.

5. Key Estuary Wetlands Restoration:

This element contributes to two larger projects which are coordinated by the Siuslaw Watershed Council, McKenzie River Trust, and other partners. The projects will protect and restore over 200 acres of high priority tidally-influenced wetlands in the Siuslaw Estuary.

6. Ecological Growth Planning:

This element addresses the question: how can we plan for growth and development in the Florence urban growth boundary (UGB) in a way that respects, responds to, and fosters a healthy ecology? The project will track policy outputs from each of the project elements and help frame the discussion and proposals for broader public education, deliberation and acceptance.

1. Scientific Investigation:

An Inter-disciplinary Team representing over 20 federal, state and local agencies meets regularly to provide technical and policy guidance on all project elements. This team works with consultants who are experts in fields of hydrogeology, wetlands, and stormwater systems.

2. Public Education and Stewardship:

Citizens will be involved in a meaningful way in each phase of the project. Efforts include outreach, such as this newsletter, the project web site: www.Siuslawwaters.org; public open houses, a Stakeholder Involvement Process, and on-going Stewardship opportunities.

3. Water Quality and Quantity:

Surface and groundwater quality will be protected through a monitoring program, the Florence Drinking Water Protection Plan, a Stormwater Demonstration Project, and Best



Water Issues



Project Need

Florence is the watershed's only major urban center and its entire UGB drains primarily to the Siuslaw Estuary or the Pacific Ocean. Rapid infiltration rates into the sand, combined with a shallow water table, make the North Florence Dunal Aquifer, and the interconnected wetlands, riparian, and estuarine system, highly susceptible to contamination from surface activity. These conditions, combined with the high habitat value of the area, and projected growth, make this "Integrated, Multiple Objective Approach to Watershed Protection and Restoration Project" a high priority project for the watershed.

Figure 1: Aerial view of the Siuslaw Estuary showing the river flowing into the ocean, surrounded by green vegetation and sandy areas.

The Siuslaw Estuary

The Estuary, and the area surrounding it, is a place of transition from land to sea, and freshwater to saltwater. Home to 23 species of fish, almost 200 species of birds, and numerous species of marine mammals, the watershed is a significant natural area. It provides habitat to several endangered and threatened species and supports spawning runs of fall chinook, chum, winter steelhead, coho, and sea-run cutthroat trout. The River was once the Oregon Coast's largest coho-producing system next to the Columbia; but current salmon production levels are significantly diminished due to habitat impacts. Portions of the River are classified as "Water Quality Limited," under the Clean Water Act, for temperature, dissolved oxygen, fecal coliform, and sediment; and the River is included on the State's 303(d) list of Impaired Water Bodies by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

North Florence Sole Source Aquifer and Clear Lake

Groundwater in the aquifer was of good quality when the last comprehensive testing was done 23 years ago. The 1987 EPA Sole Source Aquifer Resource Document states, "Possible sources of aquifer contamination include fuel storage tank failure, accidental spills of hazardous material, septic tank effluent, storm runoff, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers." Today, pharmaceutical by-products are also an environmental threat. Clear Lake is a remarkably unpolluted, clean source of drinking water. Heceta Water District, Lane County and the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission created the Clear Lake Watershed Protection Zone to protect the Clear Lake drinking water source well into the future.

Stormwater Run-off

In Florence, there is often a high seasonal water table, which results in rainwater backing up to the land surface. Stormwater runoff adds volume, velocity, and contaminants to area surface waters. By better understanding the relationship between groundwater and surface water, the project partners will be able to address issues such as flooding, stream bank erosion, and surface water pollution that are likely to arise as the UGB is developed over time. This study will result in improved stormwater management practices.

Wetlands and Riparian Areas

The 1996 "Florence Local Wetlands and Riparian Area Inventory" identified 270 wetlands, totaling 572 acres, and about 315 acres of riparian area. The majority of the wetlands are of high quality and the majority of the riparian areas have high or moderate functional values. In the northern UGB, there are large wetlands, bogs, and flooded forests that serve a role in regulating stream flows and reducing flood waters. The values and functions of these wetlands and riparian areas need to be assessed to determine how they can be an effective part of a broader water management and wildlife habitat protection program.

Be part of the Solution



- Attend open houses
- Visit our website: www.Siuslawwaters.org
- Add your name to our mailing list
- Sign up for an Education or Stewardship Program
- Contact a Stakeholder

Key Contacts:

- Sandra Belson, Florence Community Development Director, Project Manager, sandra.belson@ci.florence.or.us, 997-8237;
- Daniel Hurley, Lane County Environmental Engineer, daniel.hurley@co.lane.or.us, 682-3811
- Scott Meyer, Heceta Water District Manager, hecetawater@oregonfast.net, 997-2446
- Liz Vollmer-Buhl, Siuslaw Watershed Council Coordinator, Executive Director, coordinator@siuslaw.org, 268-3044

Public Open House

- * Learn more about the Project
- * Discover how to be a steward of land and water resources in the watershed
- * Help draft Guiding Principles for Environmental Protection

Wednesday, May 19, 2010
Drop-in Between 4:00-7:00 p.m.
Florence Events Center
715 Quince Street, Florence

Presentations at 5:30 p.m.

Project Partners: City of Florence; Lane County; Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians; Heceta Water District; Oregon Department of Environmental Quality; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Oregon Department of Human Services, Drinking Water Program; Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development; Oregon Department of State Lands; Oregon Department of Transportation; Oregon Department of Water Resources; Port of Siuslaw; Siuslaw Soil and Water Conservation District; Siuslaw Watershed Council; US Army Corps of Engineers; US Bureau of Land Management; U.S. Geological Survey; USFS Siuslaw National Forest; US Environmental Protection Agency.

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