

Learn about Luckiamute Watershed fish on May 28

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POLK COUNTY — A study conducted within this past year revealed that about 36 percent of the Luckiamute River watershed's land area is home to 99.6 percent of its winter steelhead and 80 percent of its cutthroat trout.

What do these findings mean?

The Luckiamute Watershed Council invites people to find out at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 28, at the Monmouth Public Library. Steve Trask, the scientist who oversaw the study, will be on hand to explain the count, the first of its sort conducted in decades.

Trask's findings indicate that native fish within the watershed congregate in streams near Hoskins, Kings Valley and Pedee. Understanding this preference could be crucial to healthy fish populations.

"Fish really like this area and, because of that, these streams are becoming a primary focus for the work of the Luckiamute Watershed Council," said Nicole Duplaix, council coordinator.

The study not only provided location information, it revealed that fish counts are lower than what they were decades ago, something longtime residents along the streams had already suspected.

The council plans to continue the study with a second round count in the watershed this year to confirm findings. Volunteers currently are contacting landowners of properties bordering the Luckiamute and Little Luckiamute rivers and their tributaries to help facilitate the process. Snorkelers once again plan to swim or wade through pools while moving upstream to take part in the process.

"We are constantly amazed by the generosity and the cooperation of the people in our watershed. Nobody is obligated to help us, and yet they do," Duplaix said.

LWC seeks to help landowners who volunteer to improve water quality and wildlife habitat through projects that include installing fish-friendly culverts or bridges, restoring streams with log placements or dam removals, planting trees in riparian zones, and working with partners to achieve improvements.

Private landowners, businesses, universities, soil and water conservation districts, state and federal agencies and peripheral residents all share interest in the watershed.