

# The Rogue River Watershed Council

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

### 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, extensive wildfire 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 Jenny 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 goals and strategies for the future.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL FOCUS

**RRWC Mission:** Provide stewardship of the many watersheds within the Rogue River Basin through restoration, education, monitoring, partnerships, and community involvement.

**RRWC Vision:** A healthy, productive and thriving 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, sound science, and the passion for our work.

#### PLANNING PROCESS

This strategic plan was prepared under the direction of the board with help from staff. The plan is intended to set direction for the RRWC with a five-year planning horizon. The RRWC staff prepares biennial work plans to guide focused and detailed short-term actions. The RRWC Board approves these plans. The strategic plan should be updated if major new directions for the organization become evident or, in the absence of major new direction, every five years.

**Board Participants in Planning:** Chair - Keith Emerson, Vice Chair - Terry Ruitter, Treasurer - Bela Toledo, Secretary - Jack Williams, Directors Dave Grosjacques, Bob Hunter, Bob Jones, Kerry KenCairn, Susan Maiyo, Phylis McIntosh, Ray Tharp, and liaisons Craig Harper (Medford Water Commission [MWC]), and Randy White (Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District [JSWCD]).

**Staff Participants:** Executive Director - Brian Barr, Administrative Specialist - Anna Johnson, Program/Project Managers - Donna Chickering, John Speece, and Restoration Biologist - Lance Wyss.

## 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 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.** Board members will be encouraged to participate in training opportunities on topics relevant to RRWC.

**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 capacity 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 periodically of collaborators and partners and maintain a plan to manage partner overlap and to assure partnerships remain effective.

**ORG-7.** Prepare biennial work plans.

**ORG-8.** Review and update the Strategic Plan as needed or every five years.

#### Working Groups

- **Goal:** RWCC was formed with active working groups that represented different geographic areas of the watershed with the intent that they make positive contributions to the organization. The original approach has waned. Working groups could be used in the future to provide technical or administrative support and will be kept as possible features. Working groups do not need to be organized around a particularly geography; they can be focused on

topics or products such as monitoring, the watershed health report card, or community engagement efforts.

**Key Strategy:**

**ORG-9.** Determine how working groups can be reconstructed to become a more effective component of the Rogue River Watershed Council.

## Volunteers

- **Goal:** Many RRWC projects could lend themselves to volunteer engagement. When RRWC determines projects would benefit from volunteer involvement, a volunteer program will be developed.

**Key Strategies:**

**ORG-10.** Assess needs and opportunities for volunteers and determine how volunteers can best be used to support programs and build connections and community.

**ORG-11.** Develop policies to implement and support a volunteer program that include recruitment, insurance, liability, training, oversight and safety.

**ORG-12.** Implement the volunteer program(s).

## Fiscal Responsibility

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

**Key Strategies:**

**ORG-13.** Monitor and improve the accounting and bookkeeping functions.

**ORG-14.** Continue to develop efficient internal fiscal processes for contracts.

**ORG-15.** Complete an internal audit annually.

**ORG-16.** Complete external audit every five years.

## Professional Staff

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

**Key strategies:**

**ORG-17.** Develop a long-term staffing plan aligned with projected RRWC needs. It should include staffing levels, expertise, compensation, employee development, and employee/executive director replacement (including a plan for transition between Executive Directors when that need arises).

**ORG-18.** Identify staff training needs and seek opportunities to provide them. 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-19.** Train staff and board on developing and using appropriate performance metrics.

**ORG-20.** Select and define performance metrics and reporting systems for each program area and for administration and financial health of the organization.

## FUNDING

Developing a consistent stream of funding to cover the full range of costs needed to run the organization and plan, design, and implement 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 local donations by residents and businesses 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 diverse sources to reduce 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 determining the most efficient actions and approaches.

**FND-3.** Establish plans for securing future funding and implement them.

**FND-4.** Solicit donations from individuals/families/businesses.

**FND-5.** Provide sponsorship opportunities for special events or programs.

**FND-6.** Continue to develop the annual Celebrate the Rogue and Festival on the Rogue events (or similar) to attract sponsors, donors, members, and good will.

**FND-7.** Retain donors and sponsors.

**FND-8.** Maintain strong relationship with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and other, current funding partners. Ensure OWEB continues to fund RRWC at a merged watershed council level.

**FND-9.** Develop additional local and regional funding partnerships.

## HABITAT RESTORATION PROGRAM

Restoring geomorphological and ecological process through habitat manipulation is a core activity to accomplishing the RRWC's mission. These activities will produce real improvements in watershed health using holistic approaches.

An essential element of the program strategy is to implement projects in locations where the greatest uplift can be achieved (often in upstream reaches within sub-basins near existing strongholds of juvenile salmonid rearing). Areas with wide floodplains, intact off-channel areas, and relatively large ownerships are ideal because they allow for the development of large-scale projects. Where possible,

multiple restorative approaches should be implemented within a single project (e.g., large wood placement, off-channel habitat re-connection, fish passage improvement, and riparian forest restoration).

- **Goal:** Improve habitat conditions in streams (including floodplains and off-channel areas) 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.** Determine priority watersheds and concentrate habitat restoration activities in these areas. Periodically review priorities and shift when warranted.

**HAB-2.** Develop projects that span long stream segments to increase overall effectiveness and habitat resilience to climate change and other disturbances.

**HAB-3.** Recruit landowners and land managers for project development and implementation based on **HAB-1** and **2**.

**HAB-4.** Develop process-based restoration projects that create and sustain stream habitat conditions that support robust and diverse populations of aquatic organisms by increasing floodplain interaction and in-stream and off-channel complexity. This includes projects that provide high flow refuge areas for resident and overwintering species.

**HAB-5.** Develop process-based restoration projects that provide temperature refuge for cool water aquatic species, including invertebrates.

**HAB-6.** Develop fish passage projects to improve upstream migration success of adult Pacific Lamprey, and adult and juvenile salmon, steelhead, and resident fish.

- **Goal:** Develop monitoring activities that identify high-priority project opportunities. Initial target resources to monitor include water quality, habitat quality, and aquatic populations.

**Key Strategies:**

**HAB-7.** Monitoring should identify critical habitat limiting factors and declining native animal populations to support the development of high-priority projects.

**HAB-8.** Develop monitoring activities with a consideration of funding and staffing, baseline/control data, scope, interrelationship/complementarity with partner's 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.

**HAB-9.** Identify key monitoring parameters and data collection protocols (before and after project) for projects led by RRWC.

**HAB-10.** Collect, analyze, and summarize monitoring results.

**HAB-11.** Incorporate effectiveness monitoring results in the planning of future projects.

## 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 removal 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.** Refine water quality improvement plans to provide priority water quality characteristics to improve, streams on which to focus, and tactics for making water quality improvements. The plans should highlight concentrated sources of pollution (recognizing that making improvements in these places should result in the greatest change) and areas where multiple priority water quality parameters can be improved at the same time.
  - **WQI-2.** Develop projects that span long stream segments to increase overall effectiveness and resilience to climate change and other disturbances.
  - **WQI-3.** Recruit landowners and land managers for project development and implementation.
  - **WQI-4.** Focus on projects that improve drinking water quality. This includes projects that address nitrates, bacteria, turbidity, and toxic pollutants. These efforts should concentrate on designated drinking water supply areas.
- **Goal:** Develop monitoring activities that identify high-priority water quality improvement project opportunities.

### Key Strategies:

- **WQI-5.** Monitoring should identify critical water quality limiting factors to support the development of high-priority projects.
  - **WQI-6.** Develop monitoring activities with a consideration of funding and staffing, baseline/control data, scope, interrelationship/complementarity with partner's programs, and data management.
- **Goal:** Develop and implement a restoration project effectiveness monitoring program for all water quality improvement projects. Effectiveness monitoring efforts will demonstrate the degree to which a restoration activity achieved the desired outcomes.

- WQI-7.** Identify key monitoring parameters and data collection protocols (before and after project) for projects led by RRWC.
- WQI-8.** Collect, analyze, and summarize monitoring results.
- WQI-9.** Incorporate effectiveness monitoring results in the planning of future projects.

## **MONITORING PROGRAM**

A monitoring program is needed to define current conditions and trends in the watershed and to measure the level of effectiveness that projects have on improving water quality, habitat conditions, and target plant and animal 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, private business partners, and donors.

- **Goal:** Develop citizen science and community science efforts to increase monitoring capabilities and support outreach efforts to engage community members in RRWC activities.

### **Key Strategies:**

- MON-1.** Conduct juvenile fish surveys.
  - MON-2.** Conduct physical habitat surveys.
  - MON-3.** Track water quality trends.
- **Goal:** Develop report card on health of Rogue River Basin.

### **Key Strategies:**

- MON-4.** Collate and synthesize existing data across the basin with partners.
- MON-5.** Publish results on an annual or biennial basis.
- MON-6.** Market the report card and findings to the public and agencies.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM**

The goal of the Community Outreach and Engagement program is to develop and grow a base of engaged constituents willing to take action on behalf of the RRWC. Such actions include:

- Donating/raising funds for RRWC
- Enrolling property in RRWC projects
- Volunteering for RRWC activities
- Practicing good stewardship
- Promoting RRWC's work and mission

The Community Outreach and Engagement program includes fundraising, landowner outreach, education, volunteer recruitment, public relations, and marketing. Fundraising is addressed in the Funding section, above. The strategies in this section focus on producing opportunities and products intended to elicit increased public awareness, interest, concern, knowledge, motivation, and participation in restoring healthy waters for wildlife and people in the Rogue River watershed.

- **Goal:** Engage members of the community to volunteer and participate in projects (particularly on-the-ground projects).

**Key Strategies:**

- **COE-1.** Identify and engage landowners in high priority locations for project participation (see **HAB-3** and **WQI-3**).
  - **COE-2.** Identify opportunities for community engagement on RRWC projects.
  - **COE-3.** Host work parties and volunteer events that complement the water quality improvement, monitoring, and habitat restoration programs’ activities.
- **Goal:** Increase awareness in the community of RRWC and watershed health issues and encourage active engagement by citizens to improve watershed health conditions.

**Key Strategies:**

- **COE-4.** Develop videos, informational brochures, flyers, newsletters, signs, other written documents as well as documents already available from sources such as Rogue Valley Council of Governments, JSWCD, state and federal agencies and other organizations that can be used to connect with the general public.
- **COE-5.** Regularly submit news releases to the media to share successes, raise awareness, and advertise events.
- **COE-6.** Develop tours, demonstration sites, and workshops to educate citizenry about watershed science, issues, and best management practices.
- **COE-7.** Develop presentations about RRWC projects and relevant watershed health issues to inform area service groups and organizations.
- **COE-8.** Participate in area festivals and events.
- **COE-9.** Use social media (website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.) to broaden outreach efforts.

## **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

While each of the four program areas are described separately, together they embody the output or “deliverables” of the RRWC. 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.** To the extent appropriate, ensure that program activities are distributed geographically throughout the RRWC area while recognizing that all programs need to focus on priority areas and actions.
- **PMG-2.** Develop prioritization processes 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.