

MEMO

To: Yachats City Council and Mayor

From: Sam Hillmann, RARE Associate

Date: 5/20/2021

RE: Source Water Restoration Meeting



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On Friday, May 7<sup>th</sup> a meeting was held with representatives of the Siuslaw National Forest, The General Manager of SW Lincoln County Water People's Utility District (SWLCWPUD), The City of Waldport's Director of Public Works, The City of Yachats Community Services Director, representatives of McKenzie River Trust and View the Future, as well as myself on our municipal watershed lands owned by the Forest Service. We met to discuss the possibility of collaborating with the Siuslaw National Forest to conduct restoration work on our municipal watershed lands in order to improve watershed health and attempt to restore the ecosystem for better ecological functioning. In restoring these lands, the hope would be that, over time, our watersheds would yield higher quality and quantity of water to our municipal systems though there have been no specific studies to estimate exact figures.

The Forest Service representatives, lead by Michelle Holman, the District Ranger, explained that the Forest Service is willing and able to help municipalities with their source water areas that lie on Forest Service land. Of our two main source streams, Salmon and Reedy Creek, 77% of the source area is in Forest Service ownership. They have institutional funds and support to conduct restoration projects however, the request needs to be driven by municipalities. Given that our watershed borders that of Waldport's and SWLCWPUD a regional collaborative group is forming to work with the Forest Service on this issue as to have better sway as a united region compared to a individual locality. Specific restoration actions are not yet determined but much of the watershed lands is densely stocked forest so selective thinning will likely be the main action. What the Forest Service has asked for is a formal request from the municipalities so that they may take it to administrators and try to get a project approved.

The next step in this process will be another meeting with the aforementioned organizations and potentially some other interested parties to gather information and start to draft a formal request. This is a great opportunity for Yachats to work with its neighbors on a common issue and make some small headway in addressing our water concerns. It is also an opportunity to build regional relationships for future collaboration. However, Yachats has significant limits on its capacity to engage given our lack of staff. I propose that council designates two volunteers as representatives for Yachats in this collaborative who can attend meetings, advocate for the city, and report back to council and staff. It is important to stay engaged with this group as there is much to be gained with minimal effort.