

PREPARED  
BY:

City of Corvallis

Public Works Dept.

Utilities Division

# Forest Activities Report

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## Executive Summary

This is a Forest Activities Report for Fiscal Year 2012-2013 (FY 12-13) for the Corvallis Forest which is part of the Rock Creek Watershed. This report highlights accomplishments and future planned activities on the Corvallis Forest. Items include: Habitat Enhancement, Resource Protection and Maintenance, Monitoring, Forest Policy, and Education and Public Tours. It was developed by City of Corvallis Public Works Department staff and Trout Mountain Forestry (consulting foresters).

The overall goal of the City for the Rock Creek property is to provide a reliable source of high quality drinking water

that surpasses all state and federal drinking water requirements. The Corvallis Forest property includes the Rock Creek water treatment plant, which produced approximately 30 percent of the City's annual water need, or about 910 million gallons of water in FY12/13. Water production for domestic use

is the first priority for all management practices within the watershed on City land. The Corvallis Forest property also provides an opportunity to manage natural resources by restoring certain terrestrial and aquatic habitats to desired future conditions and processes.

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### Watershed Management Advisory Commission (WMAC) members

Charlie Bruce, Chair  
Jessica McDonald, Vice-Chair  
Creed Eckert  
David Hibbs  
Jacque Schreck  
Sheryl Stuart  
David Zahler  
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North Fork Reservoir in fall.

### City of Corvallis staff

Tom Penpraze, Utilities Division  
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### Trout Mountain Forestry staff

Mark Miller  
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Matt Fehrenbacher

# Introduction

Welcome to the fifth annual Forest Activities Report for the Corvallis Forest. This report describes activities undertaken over the past year (Jul 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013) to implement the Corvallis Forest Stewardship Plan, actions planned for the 2013-2014 fiscal year and a “snap shot” of conditions and trends on the City’s 2,350-acre Rock Creek Watershed property. The overall goal of the City for the Rock Creek property is to provide a reliable source of high quality drinking water that surpasses all state and federal drinking water requirements. The Corvallis Forest property includes the Rock Creek water treatment plant, which produced approximately 30 percent of the City’s annual water need, or about 910 million gallons of water in FY12/13. Water quality is the first priority for all management practices within the watershed on City land. The Corvallis Forest property also provides an opportunity to manage natural resources by restoring forest lands and terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

Watershed  
Management  
Advisory  
Commissioners  
tour the site of this  
year’s harvest.



## Stewardship Planning

Management of the forest is guided by the policies detailed in the Corvallis Forest Stewardship Plan (CFSP), which was adopted by the City Council in December 2006. A revised and updated version of the plan was adopted by the City Council in July 2013. The plan describes the property’s history and current resources conditions, details the vision and principles that guide management, describes desired future conditions, and outlines guidance policies in such areas as forest reserves, invasive species control, and resource monitoring. Opportunities and recommended actions are offered in each of seven different resource and land use areas. A copy of the plan is available for viewing at [www.corvallisoregon.gov/](http://www.corvallisoregon.gov/)<sup>1</sup> and at the Corvallis Public Library reference section.

The Watershed Management Advisory Commission (WMAC) advises the City Council on policies and activities on the Corvallis Forest. This seven-member panel of citizen volunteers is appointed by the Mayor and generally meets monthly. All Commission meetings are open to the public. The WMAC works with city staff, resource specialists and consultants to implement the CFSP policies.

<sup>1</sup> The direct link to the CFSP page is: <http://www.corvallisoregon.gov/index.aspx?page=126>.

# Accomplishments for 2012-2013<sup>2</sup>

The following actions were initiated or completed in FY 2012-13:

## Habitat Enhancement



**Loaded truck brings newly harvested logs out of the Corvallis Forest.**

**Forest thinning** – A natural 65-year old second growth stand approximating 85 total acres was thinned in October 2012, and from March through May 2013. Goals for the thinning included improving tree crown development, increasing wind-firmness, and encouraging shrub and new seedling growth. Thinning used a variable-density approach. Stream buffers, older residual trees and newly-created snags were marked for protection during harvesting. Steve Bush Logging of Philomath conducted logging operations and logs were marketed to local mills – Freres Lumber (Mill City), Georgia Pacific (Philomath) and Seneca Sawmill Co. (Eugene). Spring thinning took advantage of very favorable market prices with an average spring log sale of \$672 per thousand board feet. In all, a total of 845MBF was harvested grossing \$536,332, netting \$362,346.

*Spring thinning took advantage of very favorable market prices with an average spring log sale of \$672 per thousand board feet.*

## Resource Protection and Maintenance

**Invasive weed inventory and control** – Following comprehensive roadside and riparian weed control projects in 2009, 2010 and 2011, follow-up monitoring and spot control in spring and summer 2012 vastly reduced weed populations. This phase of the project was funded by a Coast Range Stewardship Fund grant. To monitor invasive weed populations all project sites are routinely pre-screened for invasive weeds, as well as rare plants and animals. Weeds of concern on the forest include False-brome, Himalayan blackberry, Scotch broom, and reed canary grass. Weed control strategies include pre-washing equipment, restricting equipment to designated trails, and quickly reseeding disturbed soils with native species.

**Road maintenance** – The City cooperates with the US Forest Service to maintain roads. Roads and pipelines are mown, cleared and patrolled by City staff. Heavy winter rains caused two log-segments of large woody debris, which had been placed in the mainstem of Rock Creek to enhance fish habitat, to move downstream and lodge under the Old Trail Bridge. City staff cut up the log jam to prevent bridge damage.



**Himalayan blackberry—one of the weeds of concern on the Corvallis Forest.**

<sup>2</sup> Accomplishments for FY 2011-12 can be viewed in the prior Forest Activities Report, which can be found at: <http://www.corvallisoregon.gov/index.aspx?page=143>.

## Monitoring

*This year a total of 508 peacock larkspur plants were counted within the boundaries of the Corvallis Forest. This represents a 52% increase over last year's population numbers.*

**Rare plants** – The Corvallis Forest Stewardship Plan includes guidelines for management of Threatened and Endangered species. A small population of peacock larkspur (a threatened Oregon prairie species) is found on City property and is inventoried every spring. In the fall, the habitat is mown and blackberry plants are cut to reduce competition. This year a total of 508 peacock larkspur plants were counted within the boundaries of the Corvallis Forest. This represents a 52% increase over last year's population numbers.



**Peacock larkspur.**

**Stream temperature** – Ongoing temperature monitoring of Rock Creek and several tributaries continued in 2012-13. Cold water from Rock Creek helps keep waters downstream from exceeding the temperature threshold that would render them inhospitable for fish rearing. This year several monitoring

probes were deployed in and around the Rock Creek reservoir to determine its effects on downstream temperatures. Based on the data, the effect of the reservoir and spillway on downstream temperatures is minimal. This project is conducted in cooperation with the Siuslaw National Forest. Data and results can be found at: <http://www.corvallisoregon.gov/index.aspx?page=148>



**Stream temperature probe.**

**Northern spotted owl** – The Corvallis Forest is one of several areas annually surveyed for northern spotted owls by the Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Research Station as part of the Oregon Coast Range Spotted Owl Demography Study. The Forest historically hosts a few northern spotted owls and this year's surveys yielded three sightings.



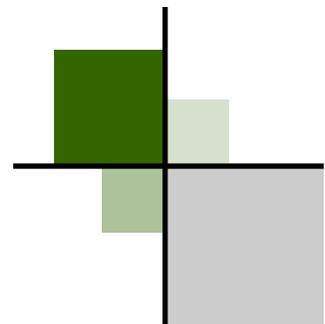
**Northern spotted owl.**

**Marbled murrelets** – With the help of private consultants, the City is conducting a two year survey effort for marbled murrelets prior to undertaking the activities outlined in the next 5-year harvest plan. The first year surveys began in spring 2013 and will continue through July 2013. An interim report will be available in fall 2013 with the second year surveys being completed in the spring and summer of 2014.



Rich Macintosh US Fish and Wildlife Service

**Marbled murrelet.**



# Forest Policy

**Revisions and updates to the Corvallis Forest Stewardship Plan (CFSP)** – The Corvallis City Council first adopted the CFSP in 2006. Since then, most of the management activities recommended in the original CFSP have been completed, and updated natural resource inventory and monitoring data has been developed. In 2013, the Watershed Management Advisory Commission (WMAC) and City staff completed the process of revising and updating the CFSP. The WMAC held a public meeting on Apr. 24, 2013 to solicit community input on the revised CFSP. The revised CFSP was presented to the City Council's Urban Services Committee on June 18, 2013 which unanimously voted to submit it to the City Council for approval and adoption. The City Council unanimously adopted the revised CFSP on July 1, 2013. The revised CFSP can be found at: <http://www.corvallisoregon.gov/index.aspx?page126>.

In 2013, the Watershed Management Advisory Commission (WMAC) and City staff completed the process of revising and updating the Corvallis Forest Stewardship Plan.

## Education and Public Use

The Corvallis Forest is gated to prevent unauthorized access and to protect the City's water supply, however educational use is encouraged and organized tours are provided. Recent education offerings included the following:

**Public tour**– Annual public tours are widely advertised and have proven to be popular. The 2013 tour held on May 29th attracted nearly 90 people. Attendees visited peacock larkspur habitat, a thinned Forest Service unit, a thinned City unit and the water treatment plant where experts were on site to discuss stream temperature monitoring, marbled murrelet surveying and the history of the watershed. Responses from attendees who were surveyed were overwhelmingly positive, with most indicating a desire to attend another tour, and almost all indicating an adequate or good understanding of the City's management goals for the Corvallis Forest.

**Public presentations** - The Corvallis Forest was represented during Natural Areas Celebration Week with a public presentation at the library entitled "Know Your Forest". Presentations by WMAC members and City staff were also given to Leadership Corvallis and the Corvallis After Five Rotary Club

**Educational tours** – School and group tour use included the Girl Scouts, City of Corvallis Parks and Recreation, Marys River Watershed Council, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and classes from Oregon State University. The Corvallis Forest was also included on a tour of Forest Service Stewardship project sites conducted for Dan Whelan, staffer for U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley's office.

**Trainings** – The federal Aquatic and Riparian Effectiveness Monitoring Program (AREMP) conducted field stream training for US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management employees. Two OSU silviculture classes visited various forest stands on the Corvallis Forest, hosted by Trout Mountain Forestry staff.

**Press coverage** – Stories about the Corvallis Forest and CFSP amendments occurred in the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, the *Salem Statesman-Journal*, the *Corvallis Tidbits* online newspaper, the American Foresters online newsletter, *The City* newsletter, and the City of Corvallis website.



Consulting Forester, Mark Miller, discusses thinning techniques during the public tour.

## Economic Context

It is a goal of the City of Corvallis and the WMAC that no tax money be used to fund Corvallis Forest management activities. Successful efforts in securing grant-funded projects and in accruing revenue through habitat-enhancing tree thinning operations allow this goal to be met. In fact, the revenue from thinning operations funded all watershed habitat enhancement projects this year. In this way, the economic recovery experienced locally over the past few years has had strong positive effects on restoration efforts on the Corvallis Forest. Following a steady increase in local log prices throughout late 2012, the softwood lumber market rebounded significantly in the first quarter of 2013. This, coupled with an unusual “winter drought” allowed the City to expedite the planned FY 2012/13 timber harvest, and receive a significant price premium for harvested logs. As the economic recovery broadens, revenues accrued will provide more opportunity to fund goal-oriented activities in the future. Funding from restoration grants continues, though in a more competitive environment compared to prior years. Planned harvests on adjacent Siuslaw National Forest lands should lead to increased funds available for Stewardship grants, of which the City has been a regular recipient. For other agencies the availability of grant funds continues to diminish, with fewer funds available and more competition for those funds. To be successful, projects must be high quality, involve partners, and demonstrate a solid track record - areas in which Corvallis has excelled.

*As the economic recovery broadens, revenues accrued will provide more opportunity to fund goal-oriented activities in the future.*



## Weather and Climate

“Unusual weather” seems to have become the norm. The summer of 2012 seemed to go on forever, but when the rains came in late October they seemed to never stop. Conditions in the early fall went from seriously high fire danger to serious mud within a couple of weeks! Next came a historic winter drought, with below-average snowpack and rainfall. But summer brought just enough rain at just the right time for continued good seedling growth. Overall mild temperatures and modest winds created an “average” year, with no major storm impacts to the Corvallis Forest.

# Activities Planned for 2013-2014

The following projects are planned for fiscal year 2013-2014 (July 1, 2013—through June 30, 2014):

## Threatened Species Recovery

Ongoing forest restoration practices are improving habitat for northern spotted owl and marbled murrelets, both federally listed as threatened species. Surveying for northern spotted owl will continue as part of federal monitoring efforts. A second year of marbled murrelet surveys will take place in the spring prior to undertaking any activities outlined in the next 5-year harvest plan.

## Rock Creek Bridge Replacement and Channel Restoration



The bridge on Rock Creek Road, which serves as the main entrance into the Forest, is in need of replacement. The replacement will take place beginning in July 2013 in cooperation with Siuslaw National Forest with funding from the Coast Range Stewardship Fund, Legacy Road dollars, and City-appropriated funds.

## Rare Plant Restoration Plans

Habitat for peacock larkspur will continue to be protected and enhanced in accordance with peacock larkspur management guidelines and the Benton County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for prairie species. Mowing and blackberry removal will occur in the fall and peacock larkspur population surveys will take place in the spring. Efforts will also be made to further augment peacock larkspur populations by collecting seed in the summer, growing it in a greenhouse and planting the young plants the following year

## Expanded Outreach

The Watershed Management Advisory Commission and City staff will be discussing and implementing expanded outreach activities given the protected nature of the Corvallis Forest. Initial possibilities include a watershed field day, a collaborative public presentation, collaborative research projects with OSU and others, creating an historical map of the watershed, conducting a watershed bird- count, increasing signage within the watershed, creating a virtual tour of the watershed, increasing and enabling school tours of the watershed, developing K-12 education materials.



## Enhanced Monitoring

The WMAC and City staff will be discussing and implementing additional routine monitoring of the forest resource inventories and databases, seedling survival and growth, and photo reference points.

## Contractors

A variety of contractors were retained in FY12-13 to assist staff in implementing the CFSP:

- **Trout Mountain Forestry** was the lead contractor to the City for forestry services, including resource inventory, project planning, permitting, bid preparation and solicitation, contracting, and supervision of projects. They assisted staff with WMAC meetings and public tours, annual plan development, and grant writing.
- **Steve Bush Logging** of Philomath conducted the diversity forest thinning and hauled the timber to the mills.
- **Turnstone Environmental Consultants, Inc.** was the subcontractor for marbled murrelet surveying.
- **Strata Forestry** of Springfield were subcontractors for invasive weed control

## Partner Institutions

The work of implementing the CFSP to date would not be possible without the assistance and expertise of a large number of partner groups and institutions, including:

- **Watershed Management Advisory Commission**
- **Institute for Applied Ecology**
- **Marys Peak Stewardship Group**
- **Marys River Watershed Council**
- **Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife**
- **Oregon Department of Forestry**
- **Oregon Hunters Association, Mid-Willamette Chapter**
- **USDA Forest Service, Siuslaw National Forest**
- **US Fish and Wildlife Service**



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Responsibility for the Corvallis Forest rests with the City of Corvallis Public Works Department, directed by Mary Steckel. Tom Penpraze, Utilities Division Manager, oversees watershed management and conservation programs for the City. Jennifer Ward, part-time watershed program specialist, functions as the City's watershed liaison, coordinating with the WMAC, project partners and consultants to implement the Corvallis Forest Stewardship Plan.

## Conclusion

Since the CSFP was adopted in 2006, restoration and habitat enhancement projects have occurred on over 350 acres of forest, and stream improvements have increased fish access and habitat on more than 8 miles of streams. Invasive weed control and road maintenance have taken place throughout the forest. Funds from thinning harvests have allowed the City to leverage grant and cost-share funds totaling more than \$850,000.

More detailed information on the vision, guiding principles, desired future condition, resource policies and recommended actions can be found in the Corvallis Forest Stewardship Plan at <http://www.corvallisoregon.gov/index.aspx?page=126>.



Rock Creek

