



OAK SAVANNA & RIPARIAN RESTORATION AT WATKINS'

PROJECT BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION

Restoration at the Watkins' property southwest of Eugene is improving rare oak savanna, oak riparian, and streamside habitat along Coyote & Nighswander creeks. The site is near Council restoration projects at Polyrock Ranch and Laughing Stock Farm, as well as downstream from the Baumans' restoration work on the headwaters of Nighswander Creek. These areas create a corridor of improved habitat, in the Coyote Creek basin, which is an important anchor area for native oak and prairie plant and wildlife species in the Willamette Valley.

Oak habitat on the property was invaded weeds such as blackberry and Scotch broom that out-compete native prairie and understory plant species that wildlife prefer. Young conifers were also beginning to encroach on some of the oak trees, which are slower-growing. Both riparian oaks and oak savanna are present on the property.

The Watkins' also have 1.25 miles of stream on their land, including the confluence where Nighswander flows into Coyote Creek. Improvements to stream habitat include planting the areas adjacent to the stream with native vegetation, installing fencing and off-channel watering troughs to keep livestock within the pastures and away from the stream, and removing invasive weeds.

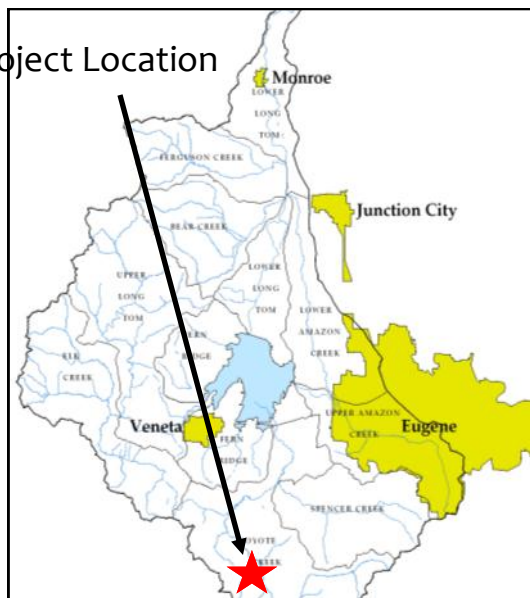


Before the Project: Young conifers grow quickly and have begun encroaching on some of the mature oaks in the background at the top of the slope.



Nov 2013: Blackberry was removed and conifers were thinned from this slope to provide more room for large oaks like this one.

Project Location



PROJECT FUNDING & PARTNERS

Total Project Cost: \$87,979

Funding & Partners

Watkins family (landowners)
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW)



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July 2013: Rows of native trees and shrubs that were planted during early 2013. The Watkins' goats are helping to keep blackberry & other invasives in check until the native plants become established.



Jan 2014: Nearly 40 volunteers from the University of Oregon planted hundreds of native willow and spirea stakes along Nighswander Creek. These live stakes will provide key habitat and soil stability.

RESTORATION TECHNIQUES

Improved 1.25 miles of riparian oak habitat adjacent to streams

- Planted 14,000 native trees and shrubs on 14 acres of streamside habitat.
- Installed over 7,500 feet of high-tensile solar-powered electric fencing along Nighswander & Coyote Creeks.
- Installed off-channel watering troughs as an alternative watering area for livestock.
- Mechanically mowed larger weeds.
- After initial planting, it's important to maintain the plantings to ensure they're established without severe competition from non-native grasses, browsers, drought & other conditions.

Enhanced 12 acres of oak savanna

- Thinned young conifers from oak savanna.
- Grappled & piled thinned material into piles for burning with skid steer
- Removed invasive blackberry & Scotch broom shrubs with skid steer and spot-spraying regrowth with herbicide.
- Seeded areas treated for invasive species with a mix of native grasses and forbs.

ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Native trees and shrubs along the stream banks provide increased cover and food for wildlife. As these plants mature, they shade the water and reduce stream temperatures. Roots from these plants help stabilize the soil and reduce sediment runoff and turbidity in the streams.
- Fencing moves livestock away from the streams, facilitating better growth of native vegetation and improved pasture through distribution of nutrients. Fencing also decreases the amount of bacteria like *E. coli* from manure in the stream.
- Removing invasive weeds from the oak savanna allows native grasses and forbs to grow. These plants provide food, nesting areas, and cover for many prairie birds, insects, and other wildlife.
- Thinning immature fir trees from the savanna benefits prairie plant species. It also allows the crowns of mature oaks to spread, providing more food and habitat for wildlife.
- Restoring oak savanna habitat offers additional pasture area for the landowners to lightly graze, helping to maintain the habitat into the future.

The Long Tom Watershed Council thanks our partners and funders!