

Tome from 1B

"We believe that every child in our area should have the opportunity to go to our camps to learn about all those things," Tome said. "We offer a scholarship for free if they can't afford it."

The watershed also began a new education program in partnership with Ecology in Classrooms and Outdoors (ECO) and Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians (CTCLUSI).

A grant from The Gray Family Foundation, located in Portland, Ore., will provide three years of funding for the established education position.

Earlier this year, SWC hired area resident Alysia Downs as the education outreach coordinator.

Besides the watershed camps, she will be working with the program's partners to bring traditional knowledge to ecology education in local classrooms and take students on field trips to restoration sites in the field. "With our education focus, a lot of that is to show local students careers they can have in our community," Tome said. "It can be hard knowing what folks do in this area, so exposing them to people working in the field, who are working with salmon or conservation, can broaden their horizons of possibilities."

He added that when he was in kindergarten, he would never have known that watershed councils existed, let alone that he would someday work with one.

Education won't just focus on youth, either. Downs will also be holding public meetings and leading community members on tours into the region's wooded areas.

"She's going to get the public out to see those things, since they're deep in the woods that people never go to," Tome said. "It will be a great way to not only

broaden people's career knowledge, but also educate them in how amazing the Siuslaw is and what a unique place this is to be able to work on restoration projects."

Restoration, ultimately, is a huge focus of SWC.

Tomes and SWC staff tell the story of salmon in the Siuslaw, both its historic highs of 400,000 in the 1800s and minuscule lows of a mere 500 in the 1990s.

Using local tribal knowledge and conversing with landowners, residents and other stakeholders, the watershed council is working with the community to increase native plant growth, protect streams and restore habitat.

"This is what we are doing today to make the Siuslaw better, make sure the next generation will have salmon and have a resilient forest in the face of a changing climate," Tome said.

A lot of that work is done through grants. In March, the SWC and a group of 10 organizations called the Siuslaw Coho Partnership received a grant agreement of \$144,000 to fund partnership capacity.

"The Siuslaw Coho Partnership created this strategic action plan for coho recovery," Tome said, describing the fish as a key-stone species in restoration efforts. "We're all working together and pooling resources to restore salmon habitat."

"This grant is going to support the capacity of all our partners to be able to engage in those planning efforts."

Part of the grant will fund Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training, an important aspect of non-profit work. The SWC has done work on this in the past, most recently sending all eight staff members to the Siuslaw Vision and The Ford Family Foundation's equity training in February.

"We're going to think how our work affects our community, and if we're

having proportionate effects on different demographics in our community," Tome said.

Using numbers from the U.S. Census 2020 and other surveys, the council wants to see who lives in the Siuslaw and how those community members get their information. Then, the SWC will work to reach more people and engage with them in accessible ways.

Tome has a strong background in accessibility, writing his master's thesis at the University of Oregon on environmental justice and river restoration.

He used geospatial statistics to show that groups tend to invest restoration dollars more heavily in white, affluent communities than they do in less affluent and more marginalized communities.

"We're thinking about that with our work. Everyone needs clean water and good habitat," Tome said. "DEI is going to be huge for our

organization and for our partnership. ... It's newer and more novel to be considering who our work is benefitting and if we are serving our community properly. It's exciting that that work is happening and we have some buy-in to that."

The Siuslaw Coho Partnership is also applying to larger grants in order to access more resources to connect with marginalized communities.

"We're making sure that we're working with our tribal partners to have a voice in restoration, and we're learning from their traditional ecological knowledge. They've been around for thousands of years managing and stewarding our lands. They have the knowledge of the forest and the rivers that we'll never have. That's a very important part of our work," Tome said.

He acknowledged that there are different ways peo-

ple experience marginalization, referencing age, ethnicity, poverty and even aspects of rural life.

"There are plenty of folks in the woods here that don't have internet, or don't have the access to information that a lot of other folks have," Tome said. "DEI is about making sure those people are included."

There are resources available, Tome said, such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service, which has conservation rental programs which pay rental money for preserving riparian buffers on properties within the watershed.

"These people also care about fishing, or do subsistence living. How could we be helping with that?" Tome asked. "If we can't reach those people, or we aren't reaching those people, then they don't know about it. How do we reach people we're not, bring them into the fold and involve them in

restoration and conservation work?"

A highly visible restoration is now underway at Waite Ranch near Cushman. This 216-acre project has been in design stages since 2011 and is a partnership between SWC, McKenzie River Trust, which owns the property, and the Confederated Tribes.

"That's a really cool project that the tribes have gotten more involved in the last couple years," Tome said. We're talking about access for tribal elders at the property — to make sure they can access traditional foods and materials."

According to the McKenzie River Trust, the project seeks to restore the property to a complex estuary ecosystem that will benefit native fish like coastal coho and Chinook salmon and steelhead, and many other sensitive birds and

See SWC 3B

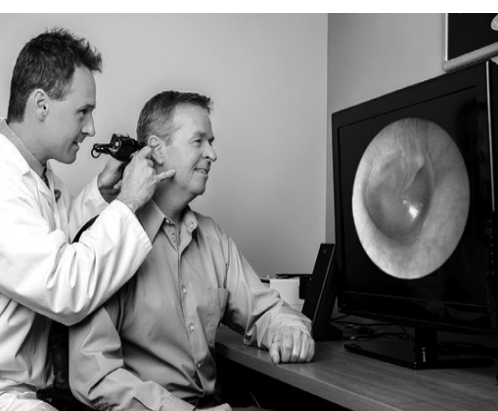
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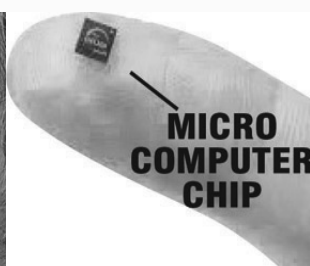
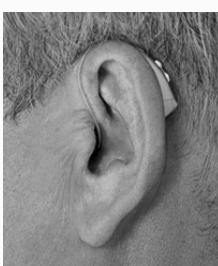
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