

Ridge Path: Volunteers make a difference

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goldenrods, Russian sage and Douglas aster, all of which appeal to pollinators, from bees and butterflies to moths and small mammals.

“The more pollinator plants are established, the harder it is for invasive species to come in,” Necanicum watershed Council Executive Director Noah Dolinajec said.

Raising awareness

The Gearhart pollinator project is a collaboration between the nonprofit watershed council and the city of Gearhart. The former entity is designing the project and organizing volunteers; the latter has contributed financially and is assisting with debris management. The partners have also received grants from the Oregon Wildlife Foundation and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund.

The project addresses a variety of the watershed council’s goals, such as supporting conservation in the Necanicum Basin, providing educational opportunities to the community and improving habitat near the Neacoxie Creek. Pollinators are a critical part of the local ecosystem and how it functions, while also impacting humans and “how we live within that system,” Dolinajec said.

Currently, the budget for the project is approximately \$24,000, but the council is pursuing additional grant funding.

“I’ve basically designed it so no matter how much funding we receive, we could work within that confine, but if we get more, we could expand,” Dolinajec said.

The team is currently working their way north on the Gearhart Ridge Path,



Photos by Katherine Lacaze

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Gearhart City Administrator Chad Sweet volunteers for an August work party to improve pollinator habitat on the Gearhart Ridge Path.

Jim Farr (from left), Krysti Ficker, Joan Hoffman and Jenny Wallach volunteer to remove invasive plants along the Gearhart Ridge Path, a project led in partnership by the Necanicum Watershed Council and the city of Gearhart.

Farr and Hoffman take part in the work party.

focusing their efforts strategically to have the most impact.

“We’re kind of picking

and choosing where there seem to be a lot of invasive species and removing them where we can, and then lay-

ing down all new pollinator habitat,” Dolinajec said. It will create an intentional “patch habitat” that can be

sufficiently managed in the future.

When opportunities arise, the group is also part-

nering with adjacent property owners who are willing to let the group clear invasive plants and create more pollinator habitat on their land where it connects with the Ridge Path.

Volunteers

Over the course of the summer, about two dozen volunteers have attended one or more of the work parties. It started with the same small group of passionate folks, but they’ve gradually expanded the volunteer force.

“I love doing things like this,” Jenny Wallach, of Warrenton, said while volunteering at a work party in mid-August. As someone who studied environmental science, she is familiar with the interconnectedness of plants, wildlife, people and the need to improve habitat for all. Plus, she appreciates the opportunity to contribute in a direct way. “I love getting my hands dirty, doing things for the environment.”

The planting phase is scheduled to start in October, with 1,200 seedlings and two 40-pound bags of lupine seeds. The group is sourcing the plants from the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council’s native plant nursery.

However, according to Dolinajec, the project won’t end in 2022. He envisions it being “a multi-season effort” that will continue throughout 2023 and could potentially become an annual project.

Additional work parties will be scheduled in the fall, and there is need for more volunteers. Community members can also contribute to the project by donating native plant seeds.

To stay up to date with project, visit the Necanicum Watershed Council’s Facebook page or sign up for e-news updates from the city of Gearhart.



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