



Progress Report #8 March 22, 2025

So what is going on with the CMCA Watershed Conservation Project?

We're sure you are curious about the impacts of the new administration on our Watershed Conservancy Project. This week I had a call about strategy with Kate Iaquinto from the Cape Meares Wildlife Refuge and John Wros from The Conservation Fund (TCF).

The process for ultimate approval of the boundary expansion of the Refuge and funding to add our properties to the Refuge involves:

- Completing a Land Protection Plan (LLP) which includes an environmental assessment,
- Approval by the regional USFWS office,
- A public hearing,
- Approval by the federal USFWS, and
- Funding through the Recreational Access Fund for the acquisition.

So here is where we are at. Kate indicated that the Land Protection Plan to approve expanding the boundaries is nearly completed. However, in consultation with the Regional USFWS office, she thinks it would be strategic to hold off on submitting the LPP until summer so that changes in the language of the LPP can be made to better align with the priorities of the new director of the USFWS in DC. A new director will be appointed soon.

If we submitted it now there is a possibility that it would not be approved in DC which probably would end the project. However, Kate said the previous Trump administration supported public access projects like our project. If we get the approval of the USFWS then funding looks good through the Recreational Access Fund which is outside the appropriations process.

As you may remember the property we arranged to purchase and our community forest are now owned by TCF under an agreement with CMCA that the Refuge will purchase these properties from TCF by July 2026.

The Conservation Fund has worked on many, many USFWS projects over the last 40 years and has never flipped any back to a sale to the public according to John who assures us that TCF is in this to make it work even if we need an extension beyond the July 2026 date in our agreement for the sale from TCF to the Refuge.

We have kept Senator Jeff Merkley and Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici updated on our project and John indicates he is in touch with their staff in DC. However, we agreed this was not the time to ask them to try to influence the process. Perhaps when we get to the funding decision they could be helpful.

And CMCA is getting recognition for the WCP!

This month CMCA received recognition for our project from the Tillamook Coast Visitors Association with an award for Excellence in Stewardship. And Senator Merkley acknowledged our project at his recent Tillamook County town hall with the presentation of a flag which had been flown over the capitol.

If you have any questions contact Bev at steinbeverly@gmail.com.