



Feedback on funding cuts to Oregon water quality efforts

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Sun, Dec 22, 2013 at 1:55 PM

This last summer I kayaked—my first time—in the Little Nestucca River along Oregon’s Central Coast. Imagine my surprise when I found the water filled—and I mean filled so that it floated everywhere around my little vessel for many yards in front and back—with large cow patties. I was in cow poop soup, literally. So I’m not in denial about what needs to happen to protect Oregon water quality or that is still needs work.

Our coastal watershed won’t be perfect overnight but it mightily deserves increased watershed improvement funding and projects, that I’m sure of. Whether the damage comes from farmland runoff (I saw a large pipe pointing down into the river from the surrounding farmland), logging, or other factors, it’s key that we continue to have financial support for cleanup. I agree with the *Oregonian’s* editorial point that Oregon deserves recognition for the efforts and plans in place, along with continued funding for Oregon’s cleanup efforts.

I’ve seen the planting of native species like dogwood along other coastal tributaries. I’ve seen farmers building large manure holding tanks (perhaps not enough!). I’ve seen projects to plant willows, cottonwoods, and other preferred beaver food species in order to encourage rebuilding of the ecosystems. Others are working to eliminate fish passage barriers, and so on. I’m sure you’ve seen the lists.

But saying that because Oregon watershed conservation approaches are moving too slowly and thus should be dinged financially perhaps fails to recognize the relationship between funding and success. The historical dependence of most of Oregon’s coastal communities upon logging won’t transform overnight. I’m no fan of many logging practices, even ones that don’t directly affect water quality, but I agree with the *Oregonian* that the \$4 million in question will advance on-the-ground knowledge of how to best protect the watersheds, which will vary by region. A one-size-fits-all approach sounds nice and tidy and looks great on paper, but knowing the diversity of what is impacting water quality and the challenges each habitat faces requires a tailored effort, one I believe is underway and needs more dollars to fully implement.

This is a region that continues to be impacted by the recession—to which it arrived later than most—and that is making hard tradeoffs on how to stay afloat. Hopefully no longer in cow poop soup.

