

Division of Natural Sciences and Math

July 28, 2004

Dear Property Owner in the Luckiamute Watershed:

This letter is written to inform you of research activities currently being conducted in the Luckiamute Watershed by faculty and students from Western Oregon University. Your name was obtained from recent public records for property owners in Polk and Benton counties. An analysis of these records indicates that you own tracts of land adjacent to the banks of the Luckiamute and/or Little Luckiamute River.

We (Dr. Bryan Dutton and Dr. Steve Taylor) are currently conducting an invasive plant study along floodplains and terraces adjacent to the Luckiamute. Invasive plant species in western Oregon are a pervasive problem that disrupt native habitats and create annual economic losses of millions of dollars for public and private landowners (Oregon Department of Agriculture, 2001). Non-native plant species are problematic for both native and agricultural plant communities as they compete for resources and displace competitors. Invasive plants that have previously been documented in the Luckiamute Basin include Canada thistle, bull thistle, poison hemlock, scotch broom, foxglove, common teasel, English ivy, oxeye daisy, reed canary grass, Himalayan blackberry, tansy ragwort, bittersweet nightshade, common tansy, common mullein, Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, and mile-a-minute.

The most abundant concentrations of invasive species are typically associated with disturbed zones along riparian corridors, which act as primary dispersal conduits for seeds and plant fragments. The purpose of our research is to conduct a reconnaissance survey to delineate associations between flood disturbance, land use, and distribution patterns of invasive plant species. The Luckiamute is associated with a unique combination of geologic and land-use conditions that are well-suited for the study of causal factors that control spatial distribution of invasives in the region. The results of this preliminary work will form the basis for more extensive studies and have potential use for development of larger scale predictive models of invasive plant dispersion. This work will ultimately contribute to invasive mitigation efforts in western Oregon.

Your assistance is needed in conducting our survey. We request permission to access portions of your property along the Luckiamute and/or Little Luckiamute rivers. A team of 4-5 faculty and students would like to conduct plant identification surveys on non-cultivated strips adjacent to the river channel. The surveys will take several hours to complete. All interested property owners will be provided results of the surveys

Luckiamute Invasive Plant Survey – Page 2

upon completion of the study. We will conduct follow-up phone calls and site visits over the course of the next three months. Any assistance that you can provide with property access will be greatly appreciated and will make a valuable contribution to our science program at Western Oregon University.

Please contact us if you have any further questions or would like to receive more information concerning our study. The contact information is listed below. Thanks for your time and consideration. We look forward to discussing our project further in the near future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Steve Taylor
Associate Professor of Geology

Dr. Bryan Dutton
Associate Professor of Biology

Dr. Lonnie Guralnick, Chair
Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Contacts:

Taylor Phone: 503-838-8398
Taylor email: taylor@wou.edu
Dutton Phone: 503-838-8452
Dutton email: duttonb@wou.edu