

PCC Students Assist Vernonia with River Cleanup Projects

About 150 Portland Community College students spent the afternoon of September 17 in Vernonia, planting trees,



clearing brush, and picking up garbage near Rock Creek and the Upper Nehalem River.

Maggie Peyton, Director of the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC), welcomed the students' leaders, as they completed a service learning project. The river clean-up project, to help Vernonia complete its comeback from a devastating flood in 2007, was led by Christine Paull, Rock Creek Campus Women's Resource Center coor-

dinator. Paul had heard details of the December 3, 2007, flood from a colleague who lives in Vernonia and wanted to do something to help out the town's residents as well as give PCC students a chance to do something for the community.

According to Peyton, the project was a great success, with the students getting some great work experience and the UNWC getting some much needed volunteer labor assistance.



What's Happening at Stub Stewart State Park?

By Heather Currey

As summer draws to a close and we gear up for another year, some may wonder: How has this year gone so fast? Weren't we just buried in three feet of snow?

Remember peering out the window last winter and seeing a giant snowdrift? That feeling of being trapped? Well, a good antidote-- and an inexpensive one-- is to make sure you get outside whenever you can! A visit to Stub Stewart State Park may be just the ticket.

Many Vernonians and visitors alike have used the Banks-Vernonia State Trail, but how many of you pass by Stub Stewart State Park every day with every intention of stopping in sometime? Maybe some of you stopped in for a visit after we opened in 2007? Come see us now. Even in two years, the park has changed and we now offer meeting halls and a picnic shelter.

Looking for something a little more active? Our 17-mile trail system offers loops and lengths appropriate for all ages. Wildlife and

birds are everywhere, if you look for them-- especially at Boomscooter Pond and Beaver Pond. Come see everything from alligator lizards to white-tail deer.

Sit quietly for a while and the wildlife may come to you!

Want human interaction? Our Rangers are ready to answer your questions about the park, wildlife and recreational opportunities. Is a naturalist-led program more your style? No problem. Call us! Schedule a guided hike or Junior Ranger program for your family, club, or class with our park naturalist.

Take some time to breathe deeply in your outdoor spaces (that's good). Your Oregon state parks are just a breath away and offer all kinds of things to do, even if you can only escape for a moment.

You can reach the park naturalist, Heather Currey, at 503-324-0606 x223 or Heather.Currey@state.or.us. For reservation information, contact Reservations Northwest at 1-800-452-5687 or the web www.oregonstateparks.org.

UNWC Welcomes Back Salmon

Part I: Still Working to Protect Our Rivers, Streams and Fish

By Scott Laird

Maggie Peyton, Director of the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC) is still hard at work, trying to find ways to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of Vernonia-area rivers and streams.

After a difficult year and a half, that included a major flood, a layoff last winter, and loss of their headquarters, the UNWC is again back to work. This October, the UNWC will again be a key collaborator in the Vernonia Salmon Festival, the annual fall festival that celebrates the return of salmon to our region, as well as the fall harvest. The UNWC will provide educational materials, salmon-viewing opportunities, and Claudia Chinook, the giant salmon.

This past summer, the UNWC contracted to complete three significant projects, two juvenile salmon presence habitat surveys-- one of the East Fork Nehalem and the other 274 miles of the upper Nehalem River and a third project removing two salmon passage barriers on Tweedle Road in Clatsop County near Jewel. These types of stream assessment and restoration projects require partnerships with multiple agencies, partnerships that the UNWC, and Peyton in particular, have excelled at building. Peyton and UNWC staff have worked together with county and state road departments, various contractors, as well as the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Environmental Quality, Bureau of Land Management, and many other government and local agencies. Funding usually is acquired through grants that UNWC writes, and they then become the project manager and fiscal administrators. "We are really starting to build a cohesive group that is dedicated to getting these projects all the way to completion," says Peyton. "All the partners are showing up and helping all the way through with identifying, permitting, project development, engineering, contracting, implementation and reporting. That makes it great for us." Those past successful partnerships have made funders more willing to assist with new projects proposed by UNWC.

This past summer, UNWC did some stream survey work on the Upper Nehalem River and on the East Fork of the Nehalem, and continues to monitor local stream health. "We recorded the highest water temperatures in the Nehalem that we've seen in fifteen years, eighty-four degrees, during that really hot stretch in early August," said Peyton. "We've never seen it do that before."

They have been observing stream habitat, counting coho, steel head and juvenile chinook, seeing where they are clustering, and looking at how those high temperatures are affecting the juveniles as they seek refuge from the heat.

This past winter, staff and the Board of Directors met for a three-day workshop and worked on Consensus Building, Conflict Resolution and Holistic Financial Management. Peyton recently moved into an office in the Vernonia Community Learning Center, just across the courtyard from her old office. One year ago, she was forced to move the UNWC office to her home when the city sold the building that housed their operation for numerous years, and a suitable new space could not be located. "I'm happy to be back here in town," said Peyton.

One other important role that Peyton and the UNWC have played is in evaluating flood mitigation-- what is being done in our community to understand what caused the flooding in 2007, and what might be done to make the community better prepared in the event of another high water event. "I feel I was able to be a valued contributor to that process," says Peyton. "I feel like I was heard when I talked about the state of the watershed, and what is contributing to the flooding." Peyton says she knows there is more work to be done, but there have been positive things that have been done. "The storm water management plan, and the flood modeling that will be done for the City of Vernonia by the US Army Corp of Engineers will be helpful. And the LIDAR flights over the County that will be used in that modeling, and could be used at a later date if we are able to pursue the Natural Valley Storage concept, was a very positive step forward."

"The flood, for me, pointed out that all these enhancement projects we work on are great-- and they're making improvements holistically across the watershed over time-- but they are not actually getting at the true decline of the health of the watershed," says Peyton about her continued concerns. "The health of the watershed-- the vegetative cover, the state of the cover, and it's ability to hold water and release water in a timely manner as opposed to just flash flooding during a major rain or snow event, its capacity to absorb and create a buffer is diminished by the current condition of the watershed."

Next Month-- Part II: A Closer Look at a UNWC Project

Property Reappraisal Underway in Rural Vernonia, Mist and Birkenfeld

The Columbia County Assessor's Office is presently in the process of reappraising all residential, farm and forest properties in the rural Vernonia area, and in Mist and Birkenfeld for the 2010-11 tax roll. The last time the majority of these properties were physically inspected was in 1989-90. Appraisers will be

verifying the physical condition of buildings and accessories and any additions or deletions to the property since it was last inspected. Most of these inspections will be conducted from the exterior of the property and the appraiser will only attempt to contact property owners to verify substantial changes to the property.

All properties must be appraised at 100% of Real Market Value each year as of January 1 based on Oregon State Statutes. This is usually done by market trending, a process of analyzing property sales through the year and trending properties based on the sales study, but must be supplemented with periodic physical reappraisals to recognize the changes that may have taken place over the years. For the majority of property owners, the reappraisal will not affect their tax assessed value, unless there have been major changes to the property since the last inspection.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the reappraisal, you may call the Columbia County Assessor's Office at 503-397-2240 or email sue.poling@co.columbia.or.us.

Benefit for Darrold Mushatt
Sun. October 11th
4-7 PM
at the
Blue House Cafe
Come enjoy live music and order food off the menu while helping Darrold who is in need of a kidney.
All proceeds go to NTA Fund in honor of Darrold Mushatt.

BLUE HOUSE Cafe
Brewery, Fine Wines, and A World of Delights!
Tues. - Sat. 10-8, Sun. 10-4
Closed Monday
(503) 429-4350
919 Bridge St. Vernonia, OR

Don't miss this once a year
Salmon Festival
seafood special at
Blue House Cafe
Saturday, October 3rd

Salmon platter-\$14.75
Wild salmon baked in Chardonnay with tarragon, served with ziti pasta, spinach and walnut salad.
This unique platter will be served from 4:00 - 8:00 PM.