

UNWC Celebrates Successful Projects

By Scott Laird

Maggie Peyton, Director of the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC), has a lot to be happy about these days.

Last year, the UNWC completed two major salmon passage projects on the East Fork of the Nehalem River. One of the projects was the installation of a new stream crossing on Elk Creek that runs under the Scappoose-Vernonia Highway; many of us remember the construction there last summer. That project has proven to be a huge success. "We had many salmon go through there this fall," says Peyton. "We had a crew member hike miles up Elk Creek and they saw spawning Coho the whole way!"

The other major passage project that was completed just upstream of the highway crossing was the installation of a bridge on the McKee Mainline crossing. "That is an example of being persistent and consistent, no matter what happens," says Peyton. According to Peyton, that project had gotten bogged down numerous times over several years between the many entities involved and had required several extensions of the grants that were funding the project. "We finished that project two days before the final deadline," says Peyton. The installation of the bridge, completed on December 29th, completes

one of the final crossings on the Crown-Zellerbach Trail. Of special mention for assuring the both projects were completed on time and on budget is the staff of the Columbia County Road

funding and/or technical support of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, USDI-Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Department of Environmental Quality,

curriculum," explains Peyton. Of special mention for this project forward is Aaron Miller – VRCS, Ken Cox – Superintendent, Jesse Jones – citizen and BLM – Kurt Heckerth – North Coast Native Plant Cooperative.

Peyton is very familiar with the PCC Landscape Technology Program; she is a graduate of the program herself. Peyton was also part of the Youth Conservation Corps program when she was a teenager; today, she sits on the State Advisory Board for the program. The UNWC has, over 14 years, provided hands-on learning experiences to youth corps crews on their projects, including students from the newly formed Vernonia Rural Education Corps, an Oregon youth conservation Corps program through Vernonia High School, which she helped develop. "This is all very exciting for me personally because it's coming around full circle," says Peyton. Of special mention in the Vernonia School District for assuring the VREC development is – Rachel Wilcoxon – teacher and Beth Kintz – crew leader.



The new bridge on the McKee Mainline, another Project the UNWC helped complete last year.

Department: Tristan Wood- Engineer, Glen Crinklaw- Parks Director, Dave Hill- Road Master, and Columbia County Commissioner Tony Hyde; Weyerhaeuser Company personnel: Scott Marlega and Steve McNulty; and ODFW and USDI FWS personnel: Michele Long and Amy Horstman.

UNWC crews also worked on several ongoing stream restoration projects throughout the region last year that included tree planting and large woody debris placements. None of the restoration work recently accomplished would have been possible without the

Bureau of Land Management and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Local contractors involved in the projects included Lower Columbia Engineering, TFT, Eric Hepler Inc. and C&C.

Another exciting project that Peyton is involved in is the development of a partnership with the new Vernonia Rural Sustainability Center (VRSC) which will be built on the new Vernonia School Campus. Peyton says plans right now include moving the UNWC office into the VRSC building. UNWC also has submitted a grant application that would help develop a greenhouse and native plant nursery on the school campus; Peyton says a partnership with Portland Community College's Rock Creek Landscape Technology Program is being created to naturscape the campus with native plants. "The nursery will supply all our native plant needs for riparian restoration projects and will be integrated into the school



Coho Salmon were seen spawning above the newly installed Elk Creek culvert this past year.



The twenty-four foot wide Elk Creek culvert allows fish to pass under the Scappoose-Vernonia Highway.



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