

Vernonia Grange to Host Film and Discussion

January 19 event to feature producers of film about sustainable agriculture

On Saturday, January 19, at 6:30 PM, the Vernonia Grange will host a potluck dinner followed by a viewing of the documentary, *Coming To Ground*, and a discussion led by the film's producers who will be in attendance.

Coming To Ground depicts how one farm community changed its agricultural future. Produced by Jean Donohue and Fred Johnson, the film chronicles the struggles of Kentucky farmers, government officials and policy makers as they move away from dependency on the global tobacco and petroleum economies

to a more sustainable and sane agricultural economy.

Kentucky's farming and food culture has undergone a sea of change. Although small farms and farmers continue to disappear, Kentucky now ranks 2nd in the U.S. for the number of small family farms. Over the last decade there has been an explosion of crop diversity, environmental innovation, sustainable and organic farms, along with sharp growth in farmer's markets, regional infrastructure and agricultural enterprise.

Vernonia Grange members believe that elements of this transformation may be applicable to our changing timber-based economy. There is no admission charge for this event but donations are welcome. Bring a hot dish, salad or dessert to participate in the potluck; beverages will be provided.

The Vernonia Grange is located at 375 North Street. Call Julie Prohaska, Grange Master, at 503.429.7055, or Jean Donohue, 503.206.4713, for more information or visit the documentary website at www.comingtoground.org.



UNWC Continues Work to Improve Watersheds

By Scott Laird

The Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC) has once again been busy at work in our local watersheds this past year. Maggie Peyton, who is the Executive Director of the UNWC, recently sat down with *Vernonia's Voice* to give us an update on some of the projects the non-profit has been working on over the past year.

The UNWC continues to work in conjunction with local state agencies like the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Environmental Quality and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) as well as private land owners and private contractors to identify watershed restoration projects and find resources to complete those projects. Their goal remains the continued stewardship of the watershed and its resources through partnerships with communities and landowners by

working to conserve and restore the health and functions of the watershed.

UNWC recently completed a "Limiting Factors Analysis" (LFA) for Rock Creek which has led to the identification of several new projects within that basin. The Limiting Factors Analysis identifies what limits native salmon from being able to reproduce in that watershed. According to Peyton, before projects can be started to improve habitat for salmon, there is a need to find out what is harming them. The LFA analysis showed what was generally already known, yet does provide more in-depth hard data to guide the work of the UNWC. "It's the same

things we already know, high in-stream temperatures in the lower reaches, sediment is still a problem and the depletion of stream side forests and salmon habitat," says Peyton.

Historically stream cleaning in Rock Creek was done "...with a vengeance." At one time it was believed that logs and logging debris should be removed from the stream to allow it to flow and that would allow the salmon to get up stream. Later biologists showed that Rock Creek was cleared too well and that salmon habitat had been extensively damaged. There are still a few legacy areas where large wood remains in the creek which helps the flood plain spread out and increases "natural valley storage," a term used to describe natural wetlands that act as natural flood control areas during high water events. "Most of the natural valley storage capacity has been lost



Siegmund Construction removes a culvert to create better fish passage on the Pebble Creek mainline.

on Rock Creek, but there are still areas intact in the upper watershed," explains Peyton.

The UNWC would like to expand some areas and build up the capacity for the area to capture, store and release water and provide habitat for salmon. The UNWC does this through riparian restoration projects-by planting trees along stream banks to provide shade and cool the water temperatures and by placing large trees into the stream in certain areas to provide cover and create pools where fish and other aquatic creatures can live and thrive. The UNWC also works to assure fish passage into historical habitat areas including replacing culverts under roads with more fish friendly alternatives. Peyton says they have identified a major culvert replacement project in the upper Rock Creek basin under Highway 26 and that they plan to work with ODOT and ODFW to design a passage solution and find funding for in the future.

In addition to this public road project UNWC is working in partnership with the Columbia County Road Department to replace two salmon migration barriers along Oak Ranch

Creek under Apiary Road and the City of Vernonia to improve passage and habitat along Bear Creek.

This year UNWC completed a three year Rapid Bio Assessment project that involved snorkeling through 226 miles of the Upper Nehalem River, Rock Creek, Pebble Creek and other local streams and counting the native salmon and trout that live there. This project has also created a large body of data to support the restoration work of the UNWC and aid in field reconnaissance missions to locate potential project reaches.

The UNWC recently finished a major restoration project on Pebble Creek on Weyerhaeuser property. This has been an ongoing effort involving Weyerhaeuser, ODFW and US Fish and Wildlife Service over the last couple years. The project involved the placement of three hundred large trees into the stream to rebuild severely depleted salmon habitat, the replacement of three culverts with two larger culverts and one bridge to assure unconditional salmon passage and the planting of native tree species in the stream side forest to increase species diversity and future large

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