

IT'S OPEN SEASON IN LINCOLN CITY

By MICHAEL EDWARDS
For the TODAY

"In every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations." — Iroquois Nation maxim

Between The Knoll's coast rainforest in the north and the Cutler Wetlands estuary in the south, Lincoln City maintains 350 acres of open spaces.

This inventory has been amassed thanks largely to the city's 1998 open space bond, which aims to protect municipal open spaces for future generations, maintain water quality in lakes and streams, provide educational opportunities and enhance the city's scenic beauty.

In preparation for this article, I hiked several of the open spaces and sat down with Parks and Recreation Ambassador LoRee LaFon and Parks and Recreation Director Jeanne Sprague to discuss the importance of — and the management challenges inherent in caring for — wild places in urban areas. The city's open spaces vary in size, human impact and biological diversity and together provide recreational and unseen yet vital functions for a growing city, and in a small way, for a warming planet.

Two of the city's newest open spaces located in Nelscott, Agnes Creek and Spyglass Ridge, are lands under rehabilitation. Up until the 1960s, both of these spaces were used for timber harvesting. Since being turned over to the city, thinning of the forest's dense canopy has been the priority. As the trees here are thinned, sunlight reaches the forest floor, bringing ferns, salal and salmonberry to life. Frequent visitors to these forests



will see a gradual increase in plant and animal life. Time and sustained careful attention by municipal staff, the Rotary Club of Lincoln City, Cub Scout Pack 47 and garbage bag-wielding visitors will ensure the future viability of these regenerating forests. To see what Agnes Creek and Spyglass Ridge will look like by the end of the century, take your family to The Friends of the Wildwoods, located a stone's throw from Samaritan Hospital or The Knoll, located north of Chinook Winds Casino Resort.

Western hemlocks coated in dense mosses and lichens, enormous multi-trunked Sitka spruce and thick groves of red alder encapsulate hikers in a misty canopy as they trudge across the soft squishy path to The Knoll. Wildlife here is plentiful, but to see and hear it through the dense underbrush visitors must stop and quietly observe their surroundings. Within this riot of green,

curious chickadees share their ecological niche with a nuthatch, thrush and colorful Townsend's and yellow warblers. At the termination and high point of this hike, visitors have unobstructed views of Lincoln City, Devils Lake, the Coast Range and, beyond the pounding Pacific surf, the spouts of migrating Gray whales. It is a credit to the foresight of the city's Parks and Recreation Department and voters that this quiet and wild public open space was created less than two miles from the bustling northern commercial section of Lincoln City.

At Lincoln City's southern boundary where the Siletz River and the Pacific Ocean collide lies the Cutler City Wetlands. This small but vibrant open space provides refuge to shore pine, spruce and Douglas fir. Even in late fall, songbirds bring this refuge to life. Hidden within the wetlands is a beautiful garden of moss-draped rhododendrons. Visit here in April

with your children and grandchildren to see this magnificent Hobbit-like forest in full bloom. Unlike in the city's other open spaces, the trails of Cutler City Wetlands are well-marked with creatively designed signs and informational kiosks. Local artist Nora Sherwood is working with the city to improve the signage in the rest of the Lincoln City's open spaces. Visitors will begin seeing her unique contribution to the city's open spaces this summer.

Along with providing the city's residents and visitors with free and convenient recreational opportunities, Lincoln City's open spaces provide the region with clean air, filtered water and in a warming planet, space for giant conifers to grow, thrive and store carbon. During our discussion, Sprague informed me that a recent scientific study from North Carolina discovered that one acre of trees remove two-and-a-half tons of carbon from the atmosphere annually. This means that Lincoln City's 350 acres of open space removes 875 tons of carbon from the atmosphere every year. As more cities in Western Oregon preserve and rehabilitate their open spaces, the amount of carbon sequestration by trees and wetlands will only increase.

The Lincoln City Parks and Recreation Department does a fantastic job of managing its parks and open spaces but because of the amount of territory that it oversees, volunteers are instrumental in maintaining its open spaces. If you are interested in conserving Lincoln City's open spaces, contact LoRee LaFon at LLafon@lincolncity.org and ask her about the city's ground-breaking Adopt-A Trail program.

Now get out and enjoy your urban forests.



The view from The Knoll