

Trail advocates seek bridge/culvert for safe crossing of Boones Ferry Road

By Mark Ellis
The Southwest Portland Post

What happens when a popular forest trail and a tributary creek both culminate at a high-volume, high-speed arterial street? That's exactly the Hillsdale-to-Lake Oswego Trail dam-up dilemma that the Southwest Trails Group wants to bring to public attention.

The creek and the trail alongside it currently run smack into Boones Ferry Road. "This is already the best trail in Southwest Portland," said Southwest Trails Group spokesperson Don Baack, "and it could be even better."

The trail is officially known as Southwest Urban Trail 6, a designation which does little to suggest the beautiful pine and deciduous older-growth forest, pathway, and creek, which in spring and autumn often rushes with rain run-off.

According to Baack, despite the schism in the trail, people still enjoy Trail 6, and safely connecting the two habitats on either side of Boones Ferry Road would greatly improve the experience.

At present, the obstructive nature of the roadway keeps salmon from making it to spawning grounds up Arnold Creek and into Tyron Creek. Also stopped cold are traffic-wary hikers daunted by the prospect of traversing such a thoroughfare without benefit of a traffic light.

Baack's organization and its friends are raising public awareness about a years-long effort to provide the trail's missing link. They are proposing a culvert suitable for both fish and humans.

"If we do not have a safe crossing of Boones Ferry Road," said Baack, "we will never have a trail from Hillsdale through to Tyron Creek State Park and Lake Oswego."

Under the proposed plan, conditions of creek side and approaches to the crossing will be improved, and a culvert built that will allow people to follow the creek under the roadway, and help the fish—which Baack said are presently dying short of suitable spawning grounds—to reach the kind of waterways which insure a healthy propagation of the species.

The proposal, identified in a press release as the Boones Ferry Road Culvert/Bridge CIP Project, is already approved and sitting on the drawing board. Expenditures amount to \$224,000 in the first two years, with a projected \$4 million total tab.

The challenge now is to get the plan

implemented in a timely matter, with the Southwest Trails Group position being that summer of 2008 would be optimum.

Baack affirmed that the project will take several years to get organized and completed, and doesn't want it to get lost in this year's budgetary mix. He asked that citizens contact the Portland City Commissioners as soon as possible to illustrate their grassroots support for the plan.

It is a plan which the trails group hopes will ultimately supply the missing link in what could be one of Portland Metro's most enjoyable walks in the park.

"The more folks who contact the board," said Baack, "the better the likelihood that we'll get the culvert construction and trail improvement plan in motion now." For more information visit www.swtrails.org.

New Southwest Charter School

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found 33 children in the classroom.

"We met one of the moms from preschool. She said, 'You've got to come and look at this school.'" Cooper likes the emphasis on parental involvement. "There's always a parent in the classroom."

Since it's place-based learning, "Juliet knows more about the environment than I do. They go down to the beach area in Willamette Park and she can point out all of the plants. She's gotten a lot more into birds and gardening."

Southwest Charter School is already looking for a larger facility. "We have

over 30 kids who have applied for next year," Gurnee said. Following the pattern of Portland charter schools, each year past the first is oversubscribed.

"That's been one benefit of this year. It's been wonderful," Gurnee said, knowing that open enrollment cannot last. "When you're a parent looking for another option most of what you hear is 'No.' We've been able to say 'Yes.'"

Southwest Charter School, 5839 SW Hood Ave., is open for tours Thursday mornings at 9 a.m. by reservation. For more information call 503-244-1697 or visit www.swcharter.org.

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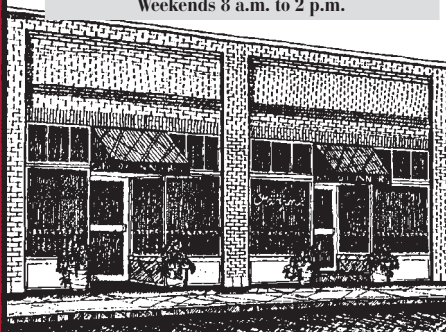
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