

# Grayback Creek project to give a helping hand to coho

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Endangered coho salmon are now receiving a helping hand through a habitat enhancement project along Grayback Creek, courtesy of the Illinois River Watershed Council.

Why Grayback Creek? It's a matter of connections, according to Watershed Council Director Kevin O'Brien.

"Grayback is the largest tributary of Sucker Creek, and Sucker Creek is an extremely important coho salmon producing stream. It's the largest tributary into the Illinois River. And all of the wild coho's that are in the Rogue River Basin, come out of our sub-basin, the Illinois River Basin."

In other words, concluded

O'Brien, Grayback Creek is an extremely important tributary to work on for producing coho salmon.

But through time, he added, spawning and rearing habitat in Grayback has been degraded.

"Historically, streams had enough large trees along the edges that trees would fall over into the stream and provide channel complexity. Gravels would pile up and pools would form. When wood comes into a stream it does a lot of things. Think about the old water beds. They did a lot of flopping around when you sat or lay on them. But then manufacturers started putting in baffles, resulting in less flopping. Large wood does the same thing. It mellows the stream. There's less sloshing around."

After the 1964 one-hundred-year flood, O'Brien explained, a

lot of large wood got flushed down the creek systems, and that created problems, because the wood stacked up at different points. So people started doing stream clearing. People didn't realize that large wood stacks were a natural part of the process. So the next floods caused even more damage.

"We spent millions of dollars pulling wood out, and now we're spending millions putting wood in. We're mimicking the natural processes of trees falling over."

This particular project will add eight different large wood complexes, utilizing firs, at eight different points of lower Grayback Creek, over an area about a mile before Grayback dumps into Sucker.

"We are basically putting in large wood in the form of structures as if there was a miniature slide, but

without all the dirt that comes with a slide," said O'Brien.

The large wood structures slow the water down, and as that happens,

some of the stuff suspended in the water starts dropping out," he added.

**SEE COHO ON A-10**



(Courtesy photo for the Illinois Valley News)

**Dunn Creek**

## QUITS ...

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When Carol Dickson, former board member, found out about the memorandum via a phone call from Hoke she said, at the next board meeting, that Humphres did not have the authority to enter into any agreements as the board president without bringing it up before the board.

During the board discussion, Dickson said that it would set a precedent for other employees to ask for the insurance in the future. At that time, a board member made a motion to give all employees with 10 years or more of service to the district, and who left in good standing, 6-months of medical coverage so that the memorandum did not intentionally single out the employee and was legal. Dickson continued by pointing out that it could be a large financial burden 10 years from now but Humphres allegedly said that he didn't care about 10 years from now and that the policy could be rescinded at any time, thereby denying any other employees from getting the benefit.

Dickson voted no on the motion but it passed. Later, she asked Humphres to step down as president and when he didn't do it voluntarily she made a motion to remove him. It failed to be seconded and therefore did not go to a vote.

It was also reported that Humphres incurred a legal expense near the beginning of the controversy, without first consulting the board, but said it was unintentional. Usually, the special district's lawyer fees are compensated at no cost to the district. When Dickson asked why Humphres spoke with this outside lawyer he said that it was because he felt like he was accused of wrongdoing in their

previous public board meeting. Dickson then accused him of using district funds for legal council on a personal matter.

Since the district had no specific rule against such an action, they immediately made a motion to bar incurring any expense to the district unless the entire council is notified and takes a vote. The motion passed unanimously at five to zero.

After speaking with the lawyer's office regarding the bill and the confusion, Humphres secured a discount which brought the expense down to \$406.

Butler also said in his resignation speech that if any disciplinary action was taken against Hoke, for bringing this controversy, and other issues, to the forefront, he vowed that he would be the first person to sign a recall petition against the entirety of the board. After Butler concluded his speech and was leaving the building, Bouchard said that it sounded like they were threatened. Humphres replied by asking Bouchard if he would like to change Hoke's upcoming meeting, which was scheduled to clear up non-performance related issues, into a full review.

"Do you want to change it? To get the truth out once and for all?" Humphres asked.

"I don't know," Bouchard replied, closing his binder.

Bouchard later assured everyone, after Butlers' resignation speech and a threat from Hoke stating that he has the means to sue the district should they discipline him, that disciplining Hoke had been brought up, but the council was not, at that time, collectively going to bring action against him.

Although some board members want the controversy sorted out by legal mediation, Hoke holds that the district simply doesn't have the money to do that until funds from the levy start coming in. However, he prefers to just

leave it all in the past.

"We can sit here and hash over history all day long," Hoke said, "I've said it in the newsletter; I've said it publically. I think we've all lost focus of what the right thing is for the taxpayer. Do we have a communication problem? Absolutely. I can tell you right now mediation—we're talking over a \$1,000... Let's move on. We've got to do the right thing for the district."

Jerry Lamb, affirming his opinion that this controversy should be left in the past, added that if they continue to dig up this issue it will affect their ability to run the fire department. Hoke added that he and Humphres can just "agree to disagree" on the entire issue and let it go.

Hoke, implying further alleged indiscretions, asked the board a second time to bring personnel issues to his attention so that he could appropriately manage them. The issue was that Humphres turned in a letter regarding a volunteer's resignation and did not speak to Hoke about it even though the two met and greeted one another in the hallway. The volunteer was Humphres' wife and the matter required attention from five staff members in total to resolve.

Hoke, as the liaison between board and staff, feels that this behavior is what got them in this controversy in the first place and wants it to stop. "How can I effectively manage the staff if board members are circumventing the process," Hoke asked, concluding his argument.

Humphres, defending his position, said that he did not attempt to go around him and that the letter was written as a husband and not as a board member. He gave the letter to Division Chief Kamron Ismaili because that's who his wife told him to take it to. In turn, Ismaili, knowing that it would take several

personnel to sort out, passed it along to Hoke.

"All you had to do was pick up the phone and ask why I brought it to him and you would have gotten the answer," Humphres said, regarding their interaction in the hallway. Hoke, in response to Humphres' claim that he was turning in the letter as a husband, held that his position as a board member and president follows him with every action he takes within the district regardless of the situation.

"I have done nothing wrong in this district," Humphres said, summarizing his view of the controversy, "I have had the best interests for this district ever since I joined back in '91 and to have this done to me publically is shameful. For anybody to do that to any official up here who volunteers their time—to come in here and shame them in front of the public loses all my respect." When asked who he was referring to by a woman in the audience he replied, "Anybody that was involved. Basically the chief."

At meetings end, the board discussed proceedings for filling Butlers' place on the council and were told that the position must be advertised for a reasonable amount of time before the board can vote a candidate into the position. The person elected will serve out the remainder of Butlers' term, and then can run in the regular election.

Humphres implied that Robert Schmidt, a man who frequently attends Illinois Valley Fire District board meetings, would be a good candidate. Hoke added that Dickson, who ran a last minute write-in campaign when she discovered the controversy at the very end of her term, would likely be willing to volunteer again.

The comment was met with approximately nine seconds of silence before Bouchard spoke, "So that's what we'll do, we'll put an ad in the paper."

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