

for arsenic, lead, and *E. coli* levels exceeding the permitted standards. The Amazon Diversion Channel, which splits off from Amazon Creek just south of Royal Avenue and flows to Fern Ridge Reservoir, was first listed in 1998 for inflated levels of dissolved oxygen and fecal coliform, which indicates contamination by sewage or animal waste.

According to the DEQ, these pollutants degrade the creek's ability to support aquatic life, render fish and water unconsumable, and make recreation in the creek a potential risk to human health.

Amazon Creek's toxic report card makes it easy to dismiss the creek as a pol-

luted ditch, good only for preventing floods. But some people see it as an opportunity for local action.

Restoration Efforts

Gilmore stands by the bank of Amazon Creek in huge plastic sunglasses and a puffy blue jacket. His short red hair pokes out beneath a fleece cap with earflaps, and on his feet are pink tie-dyed socks and worn tennis shoes. An active member of the Long Tom Watershed Council, Gilmore recently helped with the restoration of a section of Amazon Creek in west Eugene.

Using Parks and Open Space funds, the

city created four braided channels in the floodplain of Amazon Creek between Acorn Park and Oak Patch roads. To control erosion, they stretched jute and coconut fiber matting over the soil. Gilmore proudly points out the native species that he and other watershed volunteers planted: Douglas spiraea, dogwood, willow, and Pacific ninebark.

Gilmore says that he used to carry a lot of anger about environmental destruction. Even now, he gets worked up talking about thoughtless polluters. "One of the things that really bothers me is the way that people just don't clean up after their dogs. Or, the other thing that I really can't stand are these leaf blowers," he says. "You just want to put sugar in their ... " He stops himself.

"But I would never act on it," he adds quickly. "It sounds good to be radical. You know?" He chuckles and lifts his ear flaps, tying them on top of his hat.

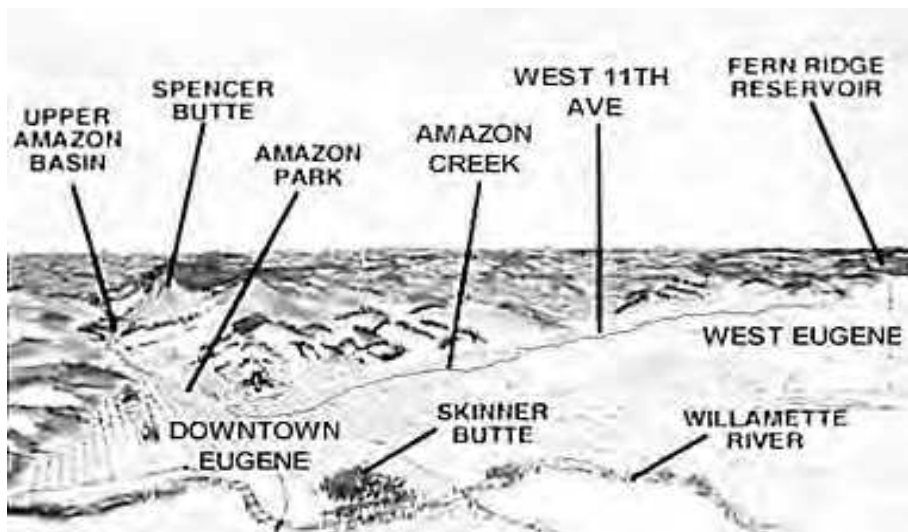
After years of mounting anger, Gilmore felt burnt out. "I just wore myself out yelling and screaming at issues and realizing that you need to act instead of just talk all the time," he says. But the media hype surrounding environmental issues didn't help. "When an article appears in *The Register-Guard*, it tends to be either really pro-development, or really anti-development," he says. "It just starts off with this

really big headline."

The Watershed Council offered Gilmore a constructive outlet for his energy, allowing him to listen to other perspectives and get involved in creek restoration projects. While his involvement with the council pushed Gilmore to compromise his radical ideals, it also gave him a tangible way to "think globally and act locally."

It seems that Amazon Creek itself is a lesson in compromise, changing us even as we change it. We've turned it from a meandering wetland creek into a polluted "stream-ditch" flanked by blackberry bushes and willow trees. In return, the creek offers us floods, ducks, and floating tires. We walk, run and bike beside it; we absorb its chemicals when we swim at Fern Ridge. It drains our streets, carries our pollution, and shelters our wildlife. And all the while, Amazon Creek evolves, inspiring local government workers, business people, farmers, and environmental activists to hammer out ever-evolving schemes to contain it. **EW**

To view a conceptual map of Amazon Creek and other waterways in Eugene, check out www.ci.eugene.or.us/wetlands/images/Wetland-map-Dec02.pdf. The city's comprehensive stormwater management plan is available online at www.ci.eugene.or.us/PW/storm/CSWMP.pdf



THE EMERALD CANAL

For decades now, a small group of Eugeneans has been advocating for an 11-block canal connecting the Shaw's Millrace near 10th and Ferry to what landscape architect professor Jerry Diethelm calls "that concrete eyesore masquerading as Amazon Creek" at 17th and Oak. Diethelm is a member, along with Charles O. Porter and Jerry Rust, of the executive board of the Emerald Waterways Citizens Committee, Inc.

The Emerald Canal is getting closer to reality. Both the Eugene Planning Commission and City Council have recently supported "daylighting" culverted water at the new federal building site, and U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio is seeking \$20 million in federal funding specifically for the waterway in the Water Resources bill now before Congress.

What would such a canal be like? "Try to set aside the present urban drear and call up a vision of a rich, local blend of historic millrace and San Antonio Riverwalk," says Diethelm. "Imagine a 35- to 40-foot waterway with broad promenades on both sides meandering beneath native trees within an urban garden. Put yourself into one of the water taxis, canoes and paddle boats as they pass under mirrored bridges and

past urban townhouses, restaurant terraces, shops, parks and just pleasant places to sit and marvel at the magic of light on water."

Diethelm's fanciful vision may be optimistic, but he says, "I think \$20 million would buy the major elements necessary for a return to the river: a significant underpass under 6th and the railroad right-of-way, the basic water 'plumbing,' excavation and construction needed, some important public plazas, walkways, plantings and places, and some attractive waterworks along the way."

He says the larger and longer-range public works "adjustments" to the urban watershed will take more time and money. "I'm talking about filtering and cleaning the water before it goes into the Millrace, returning it to the time earlier in this century when it was not the area's storm sewer."

The canal link would allow fresh water to be brought from the Willamette into the Millrace at Eugene, transported via the Emerald Canal to the Amazon, and carried past the Fairgrounds to Fern Ridge Lake. It would then flow over the dam into the Long Tom River and rejoin the Willamette north of Monroe. "A relatively short in-town connection would create a very large waterway circuit that has contributions for the community everywhere along its course," says Diethelm. — Ted Taylor



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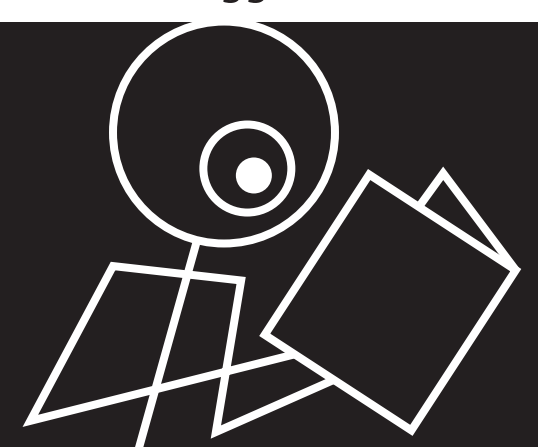
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