

the years, the city has denied several attempts to build on the land due to the steepness of the parcel, but in March 2012, developers proposed to build 75 single-family houses on the Beverly property in the segment known as the Deerbrook PUD property. This would involve the clearing away of habitat and soil and the introduction of pavement. And troubled Amazon Creek, already smothered down by development where it runs through the city, takes a hit if the waters that feed the creek are modified to accommodate buildings. Everything flows downstream from the headwaters, meaning that soil disturbance and pollutants caused by construction can impact the entire creek farther down.

The LTWC's work in town to install rain gardens and bioswales reduces the negative impacts of too much pavement. While river lovers are hoping to remove concrete downtown, developers of the Beverly property plan to add more of it upstream. "As with any development that takes place, the impacts of impervious surface can lead to erosion in the creek channel and the carrying of other pollutants into the waters," Schmidt says.

According to Tom Pringle, a biochemist and researcher who has been actively involved in the restoration of a portion of Amazon Creek, an increase in impervious surfaces can lead to more flooding. Impervious services like concrete prevent stormwater from properly draining. Instead of soaking into the ground and seeping through a natural filtration system of soil, which removes contaminants along the way, water slides off of impervious surfaces and into storm drains, dumping the water into Amazon Creek unfiltered. Pringle says that runoff from Amazon Creek below 24th Avenue could create costly flooding without proper management. When the creek experiences a spike in peak flow after heavy rainfall, the headwaters play an important part in mitigating that flow.

"In a sense, property owners wanting to develop the last of the upper watershed have to pass off the downside costs of development to people, nature and businesses below them in the watershed," Pringle wrote in an email.

Development also presents a problem to native plant and animal species, some of which are considered by the state of Oregon as rare or threatened. The Mayor's 2008 Ad Hoc Committee report on the Amazon headwaters said that professional biologist Dave Konfrank discovered several species of rare mosses and lichen on the former Green property, while biologist Tom Titus found the state-listed sensitive northern red-legged frog in the headwaters area.

"It's really special," Matthews says. "So much of those timber acres have been logged and re-logged, but these little untouched pockets are kind of priceless."

The 2012 development project was initially rejected, but the Eugene Planning Commission voted in December to approve the PUD with a reduced number of houses.

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— KEVIN MATTHEWS, HEADWATERS ADVOCATE



PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

The Southeast Neighbors then appealed the reversal to the Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA), and they're currently raising money to cover the legal costs of their appeal. Matthews says that the Southeast Neighbors have already raised \$27,000, but they are in need of \$13,000 more to continue paying their legal defense bill. What happens next depends on LUBA's decision.

When Erin Noble walked through the forested areas of Amazon Creek, eyes set on the outline of Spencer Butte, he felt a connection to the natural landscape. Before he died, he expressed his love for the headwaters and his desire to keep them free of development.

His friends and family carry on his dream now, but so do organizations like the LTWC, which seek collaborative solutions to improve water quality and restore some of

Amazon Creek's original functions. At this point, when the creek is drawing ever closer to its natural state, a step in the wrong direction could be a huge setback, further stalling the appearance of cutthroat trout and other wildlife.

Amazon Creek isn't a shining beacon of health. It weaves its way through the heart of Eugene, but it's been neglected for a long time, molded into practical uses instead of ecological ones. Dedrick says she wants to help restore the creek to a more youthful state of health, but she needs participation from the entire community to move forward. "People look at Amazon Creek and they might underestimate the kind of fish and wildlife corridor it can be," Dedrick says. "It's a hidden gem that comes from Spencer Butte down to where we grow our food. It connects us all." ■

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