

River Time

CELEBRATE THE MCKENZIE

Summertime! When clear skies and warm sun lure us to the edge of the river for a float, a swim, a picnic or maybe just a nap on a shady bank. In the old days it was not uncommon to find that the river's edge had changed from the high waters of winter, with trees and banks shifted, gravel bars moved from one place to the next. But our rivers have been increasingly narrowed by the convenience and stability of roads and other hard surfaces. Still, there are home waters nearby where the river's shifting compass still holds sway, and somewhere it is getting a chance to meander again.

On Saturday, June 29, the McKenzie River Trust welcomes everyone to a daylong exploration of just such a place — where the McKenzie and Willamette Rivers combine and make a big turn to the north. We're celebrating 10 years of work at Green Island, a conservation property we hold and manage just west of Coburg. This special place is a 1,100-acre land and water restoration project in process, helped along by hundreds of volunteers, a bevy of acronym agencies and the vision of a living river.

Just what makes a river *alive*?

It begins with the bones of water, gravity and a mountain slope; fills out its form with leaves and trees, bugs, birds and fishes; and then develops a soul as it begins to meander in gentler valleys, changing its course year to year and spreading out in search of new routes to the sea. For more than a century in the Willamette Basin now we've harnessed that life for the betterment of ours, converting rivers into what historian Richard White describes as an "organic machine." But in doing so, we've taken some life out of the river, ultimately affecting our own health and welfare. We've narrowed channels and removed woody debris. We've dammed and diked and redirected flows. And we've poured the byproducts of modern America into the river, sending it downstream to neighbors doing the same.

The work of river restoration and our goal at Green Island is to revive some of that original life, to give back some frequently flooded land to the river on its own terms, and then make the space where we can all revel in the meandering paths that it takes from year to year, and how its form again

flourishes in bird song and flashes of fishes and clean water and shade. And so with the generous support of our donors, we've made some dramatic changes to the landscape in the last decade: planting 80,000 native trees and shrubs, recontouring the banks of side channels and even removing some of the berms and levees that held back the river's seasonal swelling across its floodplain.

This degree of river restoration is not work that can be done everywhere, given the investments we've made in our built environments. But where it can be done, it comes full circle and gives those investments that much greater a return. A meandering river finding its own way across the land creates habitats, tempers the impacts of flooding and cools and cleans the water it carries. How much better is the booming brewing scene here because of the clean water of the McKenzie River? How much more valuable will that same clean water be 50 years from now, when there will be twice as many people here to enjoy it? There is good reason to give as much life and leeway to the rivers as our communities will allow.

In years past we've taken an annual break from the digging and planting, weeding and watering, and asked writers, artists, musicians, filmmakers and philosophers to help us understand, appreciate and immerse ourselves in living rivers. For this year's Living River Celebration, we're letting the land and water speak for itself. You'll encounter naturalist guides to help with translation and interpretation as we ramble across the land or gather for picnics. You'll meet other conservation groups from the region, offering their takes on rivers, restoration and community. And you'll even find two bands, The Blue McKenzie and The Whiskey Chasers, to provide celebratory melodies and foot stomping grassy-tonk rhythms respectively. So come join us to celebrate the life of the river and the river in your life. And the restorative power of nature. And the pleasure of a shade tree on a summer's day.

The McKenzie River Trust's *Living River Celebration: Ten Years on Green Island* goes from 7 am to 5 pm Saturday, June 29. For directions to the event and more information about the celebration, the Green Island Project and the McKenzie River Trust, go to mckenzieriver.org or call 345-2799.

Joe Moll is executive director of McKenzie River Trust.

LETTERS

We have forgotten who we are. In a true democracy, the people are the dominant body of governance. Freedoms of speech, privacy and equal protection intended for blood and guts human beings have been usurped by fictional corporate entities at our sacrifice. Do you remember who we are? Reminder: Section 1 of the Oregon State Constitution: "We declare that all people when they form a social compact are equal in right, all power is inherent in the people and all governments are founded on their authority and instituted for their peace, safety and happiness and they have, at all times, the right to reform, alter or abolish the government in such manner as they may think proper."

About 150 communities in eight states have successfully passed local rights-based ordinances which return rights to the people. We can reclaim our communities, reinstate democracy and re-empower the 99 percent.

To join the process, plan to attend Kai Huschke's workshop at 6 pm Tuesday, July 2, at LCC's Forum Building and visit the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund's website (celdf.org).

*Richard Gross
Deadwood*

FOUNDATION OF LIES

I worked in the concrete foundation business in western Massachusetts. It is true that pouring concrete is "temperature-sensitive," but it is critical to failing due to freezing temperature, which is why the foundations had to be dug three feet deep to get below the frost line. The warmer it is, the faster the cure time. If the Capstone engineers don't know this maybe they should retake Sandbox 101.

If they offered free rent to the local affected tenants during the construction there might be less noisy verbal ordinance objections.

*Vince Loving
Eugene*

NO BAG DEAL

Why are people crying about how "the poor" can't afford to pay 5 cents for a bag at the grocery store. Hello? How about they use one of the million they already have or find a free one or buy a 50 cent reusable cloth one at dozens of thrift stores nearby! The poor aren't as dumb as everyone's making them out to be. Some people just hate change and make any excuse to stop it.

The ban was enacted because, like other people on this planet, Americans need to take some responsibility for the massive amounts of plastic trash floating around the oceans where it's entangling and killing wildlife by the millions and does not break down for generations, if ever! Have you heard of the Pacific Gyre? I'd personally like to see *all* plastic bags banned! So get real, people.

Now, let's move on to other important issues, like EWEB's scary "smart meters." OK?

*Robin Bloomgarden
Eugene*



TIM GIRARDIER/HEADWATERS PHOTOGRAPHIC

LUPINE ON GREEN ISLAND