

PARTING SHOTS

A weekly snapshot from The Daily Astorian and Chinook Observer photographers



A surfer wipes out while riding a wave off of the beach at Oswald West State Park on May 3.

JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Students: Now the coho population is ‘very robust’

Continued from Page 1C

The impetus for Meyer’s biannual fish activity with his students was the replacement of the culvert, with the common goal of each outing being to get fish back “in a stream that used to have lots of fish in it,” Meyer said. “From a science perspective, this is meant to gain connection with kids to wildlife and to give them some hands-on experience with habitat and ecosystems and watershed and the life cycle of salmon.”

Transferring wild fish from a different system, while done historically, also is discouraged and not currently done often because there are genetic consequences. Different watersheds provide different population structures for coho, and the species tends to vary genetically and sometimes behaviorally among the distinct structures. The department doesn’t want to harm the native coho by introducing fish from a hatchery or transferring coho from a different location.

“That’s the key ... you think about the things you can change that would produce more coho,” Knutsen said.

The department also regulates harvesting and works to improve habitats as ways to improve native fish populations. Those are the issues that can be and are addressed, while a factor like ocean conditions, which has a big impact on coho production, can’t be helped



KATHERINE LACAZE — EO Media Group
After releasing about 500 steelhead trout into China Creek, a group of fifth-graders continued down the path to the culvert, which was replaced about three years ago to help with fish passage, that runs beneath Spruce Loop Road near Seaside Heights Elementary School.

by the department, Knutsen added.

A success story

Other programs in the area have illustrated success in supporting fish repopulation in their native habitats. At Thompson Creek and Stanley Marsh, the North Coast Land Conservancy has helped improve the habitat so it is conducive to salmon spawning.

The resurgence of the native coho at the location was initiated in the 1990s when tide gates used on Stanley Lake were removed. The tide gates impeded fish passage, so after their removal, “the adult salmon returned and then the numbers have steadily grown,” North Coast Land Conservancy Executive Director Katie Voelke said.

The conservancy became the owner of the 80-acre estuarine property in 2006 and has guided the process further forward through resto-

ration work. Now the coho population is “very robust,” Voelke said.

“A lot of the restoration we’ve done is to make the juvenile habitat healthier and that’s how you get to raise your adult members,” she said, adding they joke that they’re “building the biggest fish hatchery.”

“Really what we’re doing is allowing the land to grow fish on its own,” she said.

Last year, there were more than 300 spawning salmon in a very small section of the system, which has become one of the most productive coho spawning beds in the Necanicum Estuary, Voelke said.

Meyer would like his program to emulate the conservancy’s.

“That Thompson Creek system is what I would like to see happen here,” Meyer said, referring to his school project.



KATHERINE LACAZE — EO Media Group
Fifth-grader Everst Sibony, right, raises a plastic cup containing some steelhead trout to toast their freedom before releasing them into China Creek with the help of Seaside Heights Elementary School fifth-grade teacher John Meyer. Fellow fifth-grader Alexa Nolasco-Pedraza looks on from the bridge. Meyer took his class on a short hike April 15 to China Creek so they could release the fish. Meyer does the activity as part of the science unit on life cycles, the ecosystem and adaptation.

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