

STEP from 1A

"They were really motivated to come out, see what is going on and help with the Whittaker Creek steelhead trap project," Grano said.

For several years, Gessert took her class on field trips to see the Knowles Creek smolt (juvenile salmon) trap outside of Mapleton.

"I would take them on a nature walk, identifying plants and trees," Grano said. "We would even plant trees. We did that for several years. Then I told Kate about the steelhead project that STEP was running. She saw what a unique experience it was and knew her students would love doing it."

"Jim and the men in STEP are all very kind and patient," Gessert said. "They guided us through every part of the morning. Everybody knew what they were doing and understood more about the steelhead and the STEP program."

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife helped fill out the volunteer application forms

required before the students could go hands-on as STEP volunteers.

Steelhead heading upstream to spawn are directed into the trap. STEP volunteers sort the fish, sending the wild steelhead on up stream and taking the "ripe" hatchery-raised fish back to the hatchery in Florence, located near 24th and Willow streets. They are "milked" for eggs and milt before being returned back into the Siuslaw River.

STEP gathers approximately 400,000 fertilized eggs per year from hatchery-raised steelhead. It is not known how many eggs the wild steelhead leave.

"The STEP group normally checks the trap every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday," Grano said. "The steelhead enter the trap and don't turn around once they are inside, as long as water is flowing through the trap. They are programmed to swim upstream."

According to Grano, during the spawning season, which runs from early January through the middle of April, volunteers find from three to

300 steelhead in the trap. On the day the LCC class visited, they removed approximately 50 fish, most weighing between eight and 10 pounds.

"If STEP wasn't doing this there would be no recreational steelhead fishing on the Siuslaw River," Grano said.

Grano and the STEP program also operate volunteer programs with the Siuslaw School District.

"We go up to the trap with third-grade classes. They get to touch the fish and lately, they have even been kissing the fish," Grano said with a laugh. "We combine the trip with U.S. Forest Service personnel to teach the students about the forest and water quality."

Similar STEP educational outings are offered for seventh-grade and high school students. Other grades participate in modified versions of the program.

STEP has been in existence for more than 30 years. Grano has operated the educational programs in the Florence area since 2007 and has funded the programs through grants.

Hotel from 1A

Her husband, Gary Hoagland, said, "We're just so very grateful. This award sort of validates everything Loretta and I have tried to do for 24 years on the coast. We really do appreciate it."

Gary has worked in hotels internationally. The Hoaglands began working together in the hotel business in 1991.

"But I've been working him since 1960," Loretta said with a laugh. "We're the founders and owners, but we're retiring on April 1. We'll still be the owners and be on in an advisory basis."

Gary said, "We've come a long way."

In 2013, the Hoaglands invested nearly \$750,000 in makeovers for the Old Town Inn and River House Inn. Old Town Inn received new beds, bedding, televisions, lounge chairs and wall art, as well as professionally refurbished armchairs, tables and desks.

Guest rooms at both properties feature microwaves, refrigerators, free Wi-Fi, cable

TV, coffee makers, hair dryers and a "white noise" machine for light sleepers.

Sanders said, "When I came to work for the Hoaglands, ... I realized what Gary and Loretta bring to the table. It's their willingness to spend what it takes and do what it takes to improve the properties and keep them up at a level. ... They see the value on the end product. And we're seeing an increase in numbers, so it was a very wise investment."

The staff won't let their new ranking go to their heads.

"Trying to exceed guest expectations is going to be more difficult," Sanders cautioned. "But having the team, the mentality and the attitude that we all have, I think we can continue exceeding customer expectations."

The Old Town Inn staff also sports a new uniform, proudly featuring a number 11 on the front of blue shirts.

One staff member said, "It's really nice to work for a company we can all be proud of."

The Old Town Inn is at 170 Highway 101.

Spray from 1A

A resident of the area downhill from the spraying, who asked to remain anonymous, said, "This has not been comfortable for us in the neighborhood. We have the Clear Lake watershed on one side of the hill, and just across the hill is the Siuslaw River."

The Clear Lake watershed is the water source for 4,500 Heceta Water PUD customers.

The resident was concerned that the neighborhood does not get advanced warning of when

spraying will take place. "We didn't ask for this. We don't want this," the resident said.

Oregon Department of Forestry requires landowners to file a report before spraying can take place.

Then, after 15 days, spraying can occur any time in the next six months.

According to the resident, subscribing to the Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) Forest Activity Electronic Reporting and Notification System was the only way neighbors found out

about the new plans for spraying.

"This is something a lot of people care about. It affects our whole lives. I feel that people should be vocal about it. This is not OK," the resident said. "Our community is as dedicated as ever to the protection of our health and our drinking water."

Charnock said that with 65 acres of prolific Scotch broom, he doesn't have much choice.

"The invasive Scotch broom is non-native to this area. It likes disturbed soil and plenty of sunlight, which we have

right now on the property. We have a responsibility to the land. We have a problem and what we're doing is absolutely by the book," Charnock said.

According to Charnock, the Department of Agriculture, Department of Forestry, Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Environmental Assessment District have all been out to the property to monitor the initial logging, slash burning and now spraying.

The Charnocks have not received any citations.

"Yet we still get harassed for it," Charnock said. "Before we even began, we made lots of choices about how we would handle managing our property. We went with the most benign option we could."

The Department of Agriculture will be onsite for the spraying and Heceta Water PUD will be testing the water.

A representative from Heceta Water PUD said, "We are aware of the spraying and we are prepared to take samples at any time."

Oregon Department of Forestry requires landowners to replant 125 to 200 trees per acre on clear-cut land.

According to the Oregon Forest Practices Act, "Reforestation means more than simply planting seedlings. ... The landowner must see to it that the trees are in 'free to grow' condition six years after harvesting. 'Free to grow' means that a tree has a good chance of outgrowing competing grass and brush to become part of a vigorous, healthy forest."

The act also requires six years in total to establish an adequately stocked, free-to-grow stand.

"Operators are encouraged

to voluntarily use integrated pest and vegetation management processes. The use of pesticides is one of a variety of integrated pest management strategies that forest landowners may implement to minimize the impact of forest pests in an environmentally and economically sound manner to meet site-specific objectives. When properly used, pesticides and other chemicals can be effective tools in the growing and harvesting of forest tree species," the act said.

According to "Forest Herbicide Facts," available through ODF, "Many forest landowners in Oregon ... choose to use herbicides to control unwanted vegetation that could prevent tree seedlings from receiving adequate water, nutrients and sunlight."

"Other landowners believe that minimizing or eliminating the use of pesticides is a more preferable route to meeting their goals. Other tools available to control unwanted vegetation include cutting of brush by hand or with power tools, grubbing grass sod from around individual trees, mowing and placing mulch or mulch mats around individual trees."

Charnock said that removing all the Scotch broom and blackberries by hand would not only be expensive, it would be almost impossible once the weeds grew any larger than saplings.

"I have an obligation to the state to make sure the stand succeeds. If I leave the weeds in, the trees will die," he said.

For more information on herbicide use in Oregon, go to ODF at www.oregon.gov/ODF or Oregon Department of Agriculture at www.oregon.gov/ODA.

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