

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Bear Creek project should be included

A difficult decision is facing the Vernonia City Council because the estimated cost of opening and restoring Bear Creek—\$88,000—is considerably more than was anticipated. The city has approximately \$1-million for the entire city hall/library project.

Nevertheless, the restoration is extremely important, not just for esthetics, but to improve conditions for the coho salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout that use the stream, in spite of the 180-foot culvert they must traverse. This is one of the projects that could help avert an endangered species listing for coho salmon, something the state and Oregon property owners are trying to accomplish.

Instead of dropping the whole idea, the city needs to seek ways to make it economically feasible. Aside from excavation and removal of the culvert, elements needed to restore habitat include an upstream-V log weir, rock weir, large woody debris, small and large boulders, landscaping and stormceptor structures, which aid in the removal of runoff pollutants from parking lots or other impermeable surfaces.

Probably the greatest help could be derived from donations of labor and equipment by local businesses. A number of years ago, that is exactly how Vernonia High School was provided with athletic field lights. Volunteers provided so much help, in fact, that a \$30,000 job eventually cost the school district only \$3,000.

In addition to the cost, decisions need to be made quickly, because any in-stream work must be done between July 1 and August 31.

Vernonia has the opportunity to be a leader among municipalities in stream restoration. That opportunity should be grasped, not discarded.

What is streetscaping?

Streetscaping is a hybrid word that describes work done to beautify urban areas, including attractive sidewalks, street trees, lighting, landscaping and such. Streetscaping will start soon (after Jamboree) in Vernonia and, for a while, will be quite disruptive to businesses along Bridge Street.

The disruption will stem from tearing up the sidewalks in the business district, not for the streetscaping, but to install and/or repair water mains. The fortunate aspect of this is that, because the water rehab project must be done, a large part of the cost for streetscaping will come from the water project.

Most of the planning is being done by the Planning Commission and the Parks Committee. For more information on the downtown streetscaping, or to make suggestions on what should be done, attend the Planning Commission meeting on the third Thursday of each month.

Museum not being closed

Contrary to rumors flying all over town, the Vernonia Museum will again be funded by the county. If you want to find out what is being done, attend the Budget Hearing, June 25 at 5:30 p.m. in the Vernonia City Library.

GOOD BYE EL-Niño



Ike Says...

By Dale Webb, Member
Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League

The Izaak Walton League was proud to offer our first scholarship to a graduating Vernonia High School senior this year; the recipient was George Vandehey.

George completed a population census on crayfish in our local streams. This was a very interesting project and presented many challenges. George used a technique called a mark-recapture to generate a population estimate. First the crayfish had to be captured and marked, and then recaptured.

Catching the crayfish was the easiest task, using crawdad traps. Marking the crayfish presented an obstacle. A permanent mark may cause an unknown mortality and would bias the population estimate. Fingernail polish was tested to see if it would stay on the crayfish for at least a week and it did. George was then set to deploy his four traps and start marking crayfish.

The first study area was on Rock Creek near George's home. The traps were deployed about 100 yards apart and crayfish from each trap would receive a different color nail polish, so any movement between traps could be observed.

Crayfish in this area seemed scarce and George was concerned that he would not be able to trap enough to get a good sample, so he was surprised to catch more crayfish than he could observe while conducting the study.

Each day for five days George baited his traps, collected them and marked the crayfish. The ratio of marked crayfish that were recaptured remained small throughout the study, indicating a sizable population. Movement between traps did occur, but on a very limited basis. The population estimate for Rock Creek in this area was calculated to be approximately 3,000 crayfish per mile.

George repeated his study in Pebble Creek, a much smaller stream. The results were surprising. The population estimate was calculated to be approximately 5,000 crayfish per mile.

The data George derived may not be highly accurate due to the low number of crayfish recaptured, but it gives us the only data, to date, for the Nehalem River basin. This information may very well be used in the future as a benchmark to gauge the abundance of crayfish in our area.

The Nehalem Valley Chapter has other exciting projects for next year's seniors, or somebody could take George's study and expand it into other local streams. If you are interested please

contact me at 429-4062.

This year's local stream opener for trout was a little unusual. First, the river was a bit higher than normal, due to the abundant rainfall in May. Second, the river was very discolored from Pebble Creek downstream to the ocean.

I drifted the Nehalem from below Clear Creek to Anderson Park and had a very enjoyable day of fishing. The river has to be in a higher flow condition to be able to successfully navigate it in a drift boat without hitting a lot of rocks. As it was, we had to drag our boat over a handful of riffles and had to portage around a big maple tree that blocked the river. The fishing was good, with about 12 fish per rod, and the fish looked to be in very good shape. The largest was around 16 inches in length, with an average length around 12 inches for the remaining fish caught. We did catch one steelhead smolt. We took fish on single blade spinners with a worm trailer and on rooster tails. Single hooks with mashed barbs would help on reducing mortality and ease of release.

This section of river is fairly narrow in places and also has a high level of large woody debris from the 1996 flood. The fish population was most likely a lot higher than we encountered as we didn't spend a lot of time fishing in any one spot.

A friend of mine fished the Nehalem River from Vernonia down to the Pittsburg landing and reported catching about 20 fish per pole, which is down from previous years that recorded around 50 fish per pole. He blamed the poorer fishing on water conditions. He said that the river was so turbid he had a hard time seeing whether he was in a good hole or in a shallows. Visibility was about half a foot. I was surprised he did as well as he did.

This brings us to a question. Why was the Nehalem so muddy? Many people would say because of the record rainfall in May. Yes, we did have a record rainfall. Vernonia totalled 4.71 inches for the month. Yet, the Nehalem River was not flooding. In checking the stream flow data at Foss, the Nehalem River was in excess of 2,000 cubic feet per second, high for May which usually averages just over 1,000 C.F.S., but still lower than April's normal 2,500 C.F.S. We don't expect the Nehalem to be muddy in April so why should we expect it to be muddy in May or June as it turned out to be. I have seen these events before and it seems that the turbid water is coming from only certain streams in our area. Pebble Creek, Coon Creek, East Fork of

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