

2000 was great for Vernonia and 2001 will bring more success

By Robyn Bassett, Director
Vernonia Public Works

The year 2000 was over in the blink of an eye. The community was very busy with the completion of several improvement projects throughout the city, plus the planning of projects for 2001.

Projects completed in 2000 and projects proposed for 2001 have developed with the efforts of volunteers serving on committees such as Parks, Transportation, City Council Planning Commission, Vernonia Pride and Chamber of Commerce. State, County, local government and the community working together toward the betterment of Vernonia has been our greatest success. Thank you all for the grandest

year ever and for the future 2001 projects.

Outlined here, are the projects completed in 2000 and the projects coming up for the year 2001:

Water System

Corey Hill Reservoir, located at the top of Bridge Street adjacent to Vernonia Memorial Cemetery, has leaked approximately 3,000,000 gallons of treated water per year for many years. In 1999, during the Water Distribution Rehab project, we found that repairs needed at the reservoir were far more extensive than had been planned, approx. \$30,000. The 150,000 gallon reservoir required a complete relining of the in-ground interior concrete walls. Funds were appropriat-

ed in the 2000-01 fiscal year budget and the lining project was successfully completed in August 2000.

Stoney Point Reservoir received a thorough cleaning inside, where debris had accumulated during past years of operation from the old water lines and the old treatment facility. To prevent having to take the reservoir off line and creating a desperate shortage in the water supply, divers were called in to clean and inspect the 1.2 million-gallon reservoir.

Wastewater

Discharge limitations placed on the Nehalem River through the Endangered Fish Species Act created funding opportunities for the city. As with any opportunity for grant funds through the state, the more you are in non-compliance, the better your chance of getting funds. Through the funding process within Columbia County, the city received first priority in the Infrastructure category for engineering design of the Wastewater Treatment Facilities. The engineered design will provide several phases of improvements for the community in the next 20 years and

beyond.

The city has been moving forward with a Wastewater Facility Plan that was completed December 29. Parties involved in developing the plan were Dale Webb, president of the Izaak Walton League Nehalem Valley Chapter, Maggie Peyton, coordinator of the Upper and Lower Nehalem River Watershed Councils, and Alan Bogner of the Department of Environmental Quality Partnerships Team. The plan addresses the needs and issues of the wastewater facilities. The issues are storage for the months of May through October and odor control. Projected improvements for 2001 are aeration systems within the lagoon system for odor control, and planting and irrigation of poplar trees within the city property surrounding the lagoon area. A Public Hearing is scheduled for review and comment January 16 at 6:30 in City Hall.

Streets

A \$25,000 Special Cities Allotment grant obtained through ODOT enabled the city to complete, in July 2000, much needed pavement and pedestrian improvements to Weed Ave. The City has also received notification of another \$25,000 grant for the paving of Madison Ave. from Bridge to Cougar. Completion is projected for June 2001.

Also in July 2000, the city obtained \$450,000 in funding for much-needed improvements to the residential street system throughout the community. The Transportation Committee has completed preliminary design of the 2001 Resurfacing Project throughout the community's residential streets. The limited funding available created a 5-year rehabilitation process. Final design will be available for public review and comment in February 2000. Resurfacing will begin in June 2001.

Parks

For several years, limited funding prohibited completion of the Linear Trail extension project from Anderson Park to Vernonia. The determination and perseverance of the Parks Committee, ODOT, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, Columbia County and community members brought the project to successful completion in October 2000. Through these partnerships, the city obtained \$25,000 from ODOT, \$70,000 from OPRD and \$35,000 from Columbia County.

In March 2000, the city received \$3500 in State tourism dollars and matched that amount to fund the entrance sign on the south end of town, plus informational kiosks to be located at Vernonia Lake and Shay Memorial Park. Completion of the entrance sign would not have been accomplished without the determination of Donna Gehrke of Vernonia Pride, who got volunteer labor to excavate and grade the site from Bill Sword, sign design from Michael Snow, and electrical installation by Todd Sullivan. The kiosks will hold information on history and businesses/services in the Nehalem Valley. They are being constructed by Hardwood Originals in Vernonia and are scheduled for completion in February.

Improvements to Shay Memorial Park have been put on hold due to funding limitations. Planned improvements include placement of a new fence and shelter around the locomotive, landscaping and seating areas. The city is pursuing funding to complete the project in FY2001-02.

In May 2000, the city was awarded \$38,000 for two ADA accessible, floating fishing docks. The project cannot be completed until adequate rainfall fills the lake. Completion is

Please see page 14

Banks Library column unavailable

Due to unforeseen circumstances, there will be no report from the Banks Public Library this month. Everything should be back on schedule next month, with the Banks Library column scheduled for February 7. For information about the library and/or its activities, call the number below.

Banks Public Library: 111 Market Street.
Hours: Tues., Wed., Thurs., 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.; Fri. and Sat. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Preschool Story Time, Weds., 10:15 a.m.
Phone: (503) 324-1382
Internet: www.WILnet.wcls.lib.or.us.

Special District Election is March 13th

From page 1

Position 4, held by Ulrich Schockelt.

Position 1 is a two-year term; the other two are four-year terms.

Following are the openings and filings, through January 2, for area fire districts

Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District

Position 1 is currently held by Don Webb, who has filed for re-election.

Position 5, held at this time by Lyle Barker, who has not yet filed nomination papers. Former district fire chief Steve Weller has filed for Position 5.

Both are four-year terms.

Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District

Position 3, currently held by Paul Ramsey. No filing.

Position 4, held by Randy Hansen. No filing.

Position 5, incumbent Ray Kyser has filed for re-election.

All are four-year terms.

Tri-City Rural Fire District

Position 1, held by Joe Evers. Edward Evey has filed for Position 1.

Position 3, incumbent Duane Spiering. No filing.

Position 4, presently held by

Mark Schmidlin. No filing.

Positions 1 and 3 are four-year terms; Position 4 is a two-year term.

Elsie-Vinemaple Rural Fire District

Three positions will be decided in the March election.

Position 2 is presently held by Bill Stevens.

Position 3, held by Walter James.

Position 5 is held by Jim Morris.

All are for four-year terms.

The last day to register to vote in the Special District Election will be February 20, 2001.

Ike Says...

the age structure will slowly increase as the herd grows. This increase comes as fawns, which offset the number of deer surviving to ages above the mean age of the herd. During the moratorium, our deer herd grew by only one percent per year.

If a herd suddenly develops a rapid increase in age structure, this is an indicator that something has gone wrong. This is what happened in our area. The average age structure increased by nine percent in 1999 harvest data. In order for such a change to take place, a decline in younger animals of about 70 percent would be required. In fact, a 35 percent decrease in both the fawn and yearling age-classes of the early nineties herd-harvest-data brings us to our present age structure. The percentage of harvest data for 1999 suggests that the fawn harvest was down 50 percent and the yearling harvest was off 20 percent from previous data sets.

While hunters this year harvested some very nice bucks, there was one component missing.

Forked horn bucks were far fewer. The implication is that the older bucks are a legacy from the moratorium herd build-up and the lack of forked horns in the harvest is a result of fewer offspring from having fewer does and poor survival due to weather and disease. This older buck harvest will last only a couple more years, at best, and then things will look very bleak.

The one bright note so far this year is that there have not been any reports of the dreaded hair-loss syndrome. It is a bit early in the year, and the weather has been dry, but we have a lot of winter ahead of us. At this point, we find the deer herd down and ODF&W once again pounding the does for a Buck (\$)!

The most discouraging aspect to me, though, is the people who are partaking in these hunts. I have half a notion to list your names so that your peers know who you are. It is bad enough having to battle the professionals, without having to battle the people for whom we are trying to create better hunting. We need to learn from history...and not wait for a crisis...before we suddenly realize a resource may be gone.

On a brighter note, Coho salmon were seen spawning in Pebble creek in good numbers in late December. Maybe we are turning a corner on this particular crisis.

Izaak Walton League Nehalem Valley Chapter meetings are on the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. The public is welcome.
For meeting location, call (503) 429-7193.

Letters to the Editor

Columnist's numbers really don't add up

To the Editor:

Voters, don't be confused by the figures publicized by columnist David Reinhard in the Sunday Oregonian (Dec. 31, 2000). Citing a forthcoming study from Oregon Tax Research (OTR) Mr. Reinhard says that Oregon schools spent \$7933 per student in the 1999-2000 school year.

The 47J School Board and Budget Committee would be thrilled to have that much money to spend on our students. In fact, however, we will receive approximately \$4865 per student this year (2000-2001),

a slight increase from last year which is offset by a drop in enrollment. Since the study cited by Mr. Reinhard is unavailable, it is impossible to examine how the extravagant numbers he uses were determined.

The more than three-thousand dollars difference per student - between what OTR reportedly says we receive and what we actually receive - would go a LONG way to relieve our overcrowded classrooms, provide needed programs and improve education in our district.

Schann W. Nelson
Board Member 47J
Vernonia

POLICY ON LETTERS

The INDEPENDENT welcomes readers' letters and will publish as many as possible. All letters must be signed, including those sent by fax, and include a verifiable address and telephone number, which will not be printed except at the writer's request. Unsigned letters will not be published.