

City will hold hearing on proposed fees for parks

The Vernonia Parks Commission recommended to the City Council, May 7, that a fee system be instituted to raise funds for park maintenance and operations. For the past seven years, the only revenue base for parks has been derived from overnight rentals at Anderson Park.

With the increase in park usage, the cost of maintenance has also gone up. Additionally, the coming increase in electric rates will seriously impact park

operations.

Fees under consideration include increases in overnight rentals. Recommendations include the following:

- Campsite w/full RV hookup, \$18/night
- Campsite w/electricity only, \$16/night
- Campsite self-contained RV, \$14/night
- Campsite, primitive, Airport Park & Vernonia Lake, \$8/night
- Campsite, primitive, Anderson Park, \$10/night

- Each add'l vehicle, \$2/night
- Nonrefundable campsite deposit, = to one night stay
- Reserve open picnic area, \$10
- Reserve covered picnic area, \$30
- Sewage dump, \$5
- Firewood, \$4/bundle

The most controversial proposal was for a \$12 annual day use pass, with great concern about how it could reasonably be enforced.

Vernonia's abundance of parks require about \$26,000

per year for maintenance and operations, even with many volunteer hours. Anderson Park revenue for 1999-2000 was \$29,000, leaving very little for improvements or major repairs.

The public is invited to attend the hearing on Tuesday, June 5, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber at City Hall. Anyone wanting to present suggestions, opposition or support will have the opportunity to speak.

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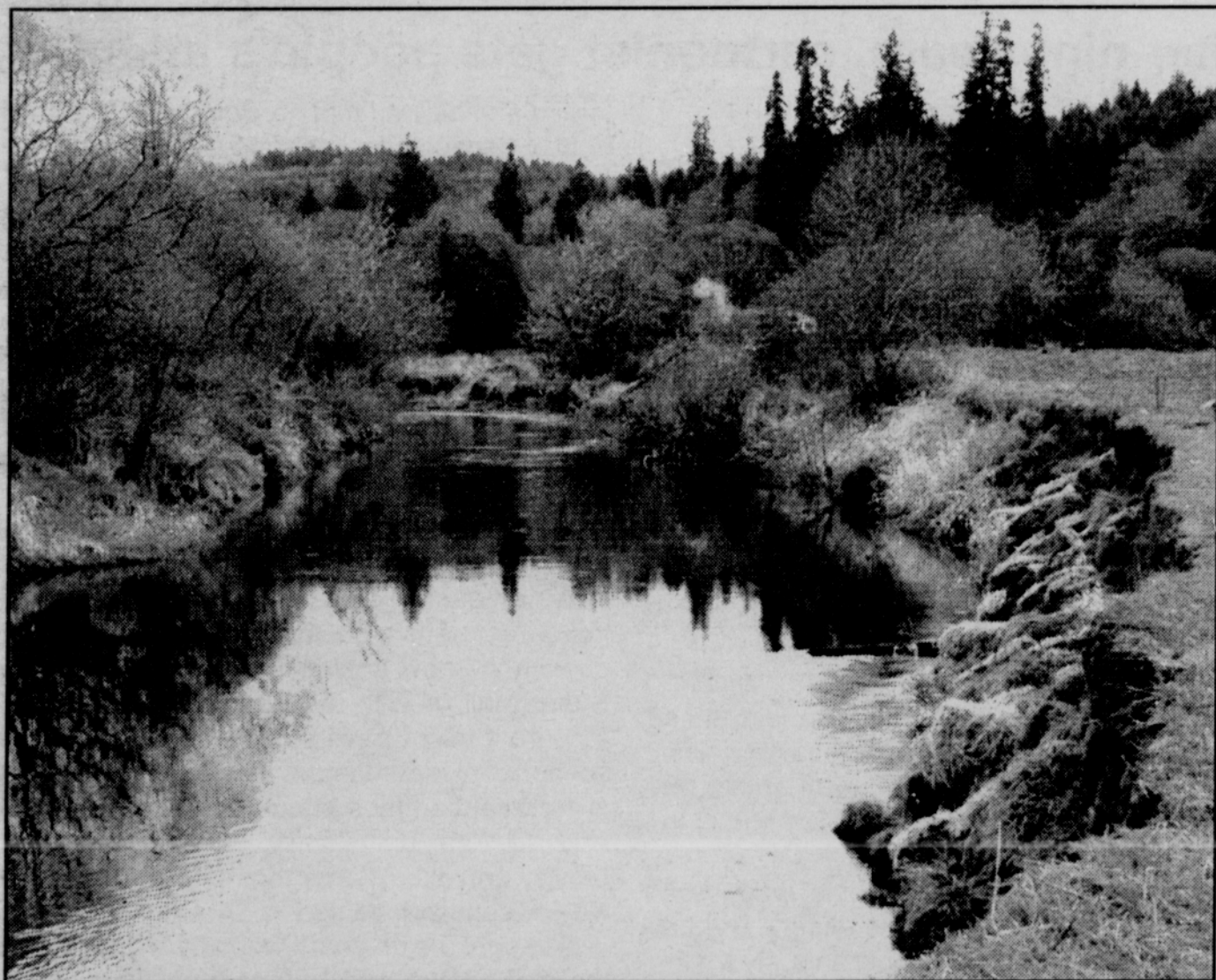
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Restoration in progress



This section of the Nehalem River shows restoration work underway, on the right, with loose soil removed from the stream bank and straw bales secured to it with willow cuttings. This will prevent sediment spills and allow the bank to rebuild. A healthy riparian area can be seen in the background, with native trees and shrubs on the banks.

Vernonia budget balanced, at the time

Balancing a tight budget is never much fun and when it is obvious that the balance will be achieved only through personnel cutbacks, it can become quite miserable.

That is what the City of Vernonia faced this year. Starting with a \$43,000 shortfall, the budget committee approved the recommendations of Administrator Mike Sykes to allocate more water revenues to

administration, thereby helping with personnel costs. The change was made by reducing the amount of contingency funds left in the water fund.

The amount of that change which could be justified, however, wasn't enough to cover all of the shortage and there was little room for easy decisions. Balance was reached by reducing the hours of the Police Department clerk to half

time.

The police department has five officers and receives about 53 percent of the city's General Fund revenues. Public Works also has five full time people, but funding for that department is derived from several sources, primarily water and sewer revenues. These funds must be used in specific ways and unlike the general fund, are not discretionary.

The budget, as approved, is still tentative because it doesn't allow for any salary increases, though it does pay increased health insurance costs. Negotiations are currently underway with two employees unions. If it is impossible to reach agreement without an increase, the

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Youth Corps works to repair watershed

Many of you may have noticed work crews swarming along the banks of the Nehalem River over the last few weeks, along Highway 47 north of Vernonia. The activity is the result of a greatly needed stream-side restoration project being undertaken by the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council restoration crew, with manpower provided by the St. Helens-based Oregon Youth Conservation Corps, under the exemplary leadership of Anna Vacca.

The bank along this portion of the stream has been eroding for many years, a process that was greatly accelerated by the flood of 1996. Many cubic yards of soil have eroded from the river's banks and been carried away downstream. The work being performed at this site will help prevent further erosion of the stream bank, build up the bank to allow for future planting along the riparian zone, and prevent the loss of valuable farm land. Many miles along the Nehalem River have been successfully restored, maintained and monitored in similar projects.

The first step of this particular project requires removal of all unwanted debris from the edge of the bank to the water's edge. Then loose soil is broken away from the bank and removed, to prevent a sediment spill into the water.

Next, straw bales, old Christmas trees, long willow cuttings, large branches and other small wood are strategically placed in and along the water's edge, and held in place by willow stakes. This is done to prevent sediment from spilling into the water and potentially choking salmon nests, called redds. Prevent sediment spills helps assure a healthier

body of water and also helps increase native salmon populations.

Eventually the willow stakes used to anchor the straw bales and old Christmas trees, will take root and grow to maturity, further protecting the stream while also providing shade to maintain water temperatures at levels that are healthy for salmon and steelhead.

Once all of the clean up and placement have been completed, Vacca and the OYCC crew, supervised by Maggie Peyton of the Nehalem Watershed Councils, will tackle the next step — planting young alder and willow trees, along with other native tree and shrub species, on and along the bank. As these young trees mature, their root systems develop and help maintain stabilization along the stream bank by spreading out and creating a sort of fibrous undergrowth. This undergrowth holds the soil in place somewhat like a sponge holds water.

To assure that these young trees have the best chance of survival, they will be closely monitored and a solar-powered drip irrigation system will be installed to keep them moist through the warm spring and dry summer months. The final stage of this project will be future plantings of conifers and native stream-side vegetation along the riparian zone, to restore the stream bank as nearly as possible to natural conditions.

This project and others like it are working. The Nehalem Watershed Council, along with volunteers and organizations like OYCC, have planted more than 130,000 trees, and completed and monitored successful restoration of approximately

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Voters defeat both Ballot Measures

With slightly less than 40 percent of Columbia County voters bothering to vote by mail, both measures on the May 15 ballot went down to defeat.

Measure 5-90, a local option tax measure for a county his-

torical fund, was defeated with 68 percent of those voting in opposition, to 31 percent in favor.

Measure 5-91, which would have amended the County's natural resources depletion fee ordinance, also lost by a wide margin.