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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

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Winter recreation spot



Improvements at Anderson Park are bringing visitors to Vernonia even on a cool February weekend. These visitors brought along their bikes, too, to enjoy the linear trail.

Election cycle starts; filing deadline near

Like Christmas, the election season seems to come around before most people are ready.

Nevertheless, the deadline for filing nomination papers for state and county offices that will be on the May 21, 2002, primary election ballot, is March 12, less than a month away.

In addition to state and federal openings, several county positions will be on the ballot.

The term of Columbia County Commissioner Rita Bernhard will expire this year, as will county assessor, county clerk and district attorney. Incumbents who have filed for re-election, as of Tuesday morning, include County Assessor Tom Linhares, County Clerk Betty Huser and District Attorney Steve Atchison.

There will be two openings on the Columbia County Circuit Court. The positions held by Judge Steve Reed and Judge Ted Grove will both be on the

ballot. Reed has filed for re-election.

Oregon Representative Betsy Johnson (who represents Vernonia and Mist since re-districting took effect), has filed for re-election, as has state Senator Joan Dukes. Dukes was saved by the bell, so to speak, when the state Supreme Court tossed out the term limits law. Had it been judged constitutional, Dukes would have had no choice about leaving the position.

On the federal level, Democratic Congressman David Wu will seek re-election, as will Republican Senator Gordon Smith.

There will be nothing on the ballot for the City of Vernonia. City offices are voted on during the general election in November.

Although candidates must file by March 12, the deadline for filing a ballot measure is March 21.

April 30 is the last day to register for the May 21 election.

Commissioner would eliminate regional strategies

By Noni Andersen

Columbia County Commissioner Joe Corsiglia submitted written testimony recommending the elimination of the Regional Strategies program as a statewide cost-cutting effort, in spite of the fact it has brought hundreds of thousands of dollars to Columbia County in the form of grants and low-cost loans. Corsiglia based his suggestion on what he feels is unnecessary overhead, because there is "an administrator in five regions throughout Oregon."

He further wrote: "...sending a pro-rated amount directly to each county with the task of addressing real industry needs ...to assure outcomes within each county in an effective program..."

Asked by *The Independent* why he would send Regional Strategies funds to metropolitan counties, when the program is designed for rural areas, Corsiglia said he didn't consider that when he suggested the money go to all the counties.

He also said he wasn't speaking for the Board of County Commissioners, although the letter was written on county stationery and he signed it as a county commissioner.

"I don't know what (Commissioner) Tony (Hyde) and (Commissioner) Rita (Bernhard) think (about the program)," Corsiglia said.

To provide a little background, here are some of the projects that have been helped with Regional Strategies funds:

- \$14,160 grant to Business Assistance Teams, Vernonia & Clatskanie, for small business owner financial and technical training.

- \$60,000 grant to Columbia Health District to conduct needs assessment (see pg. 12).

- \$50,000 grant to construct Columbia River fishing pier.

- \$21,000 grant to improve security around historic locomotive in Shay Park.

- \$93,630 grant to improve water, sewer and electrical services at Anderson Park.

- \$40,000 grant to improve 4-H facility at Columbia County Fairgrounds.

- \$5,000 grant to assess community college needs in PCC service area of Columbia County.

- \$55,000 grant to

Clatskanie Park District facility improvements.

- \$49,000 grant for Vernonia streetscape.

- \$11,000 grant to pave path and parking lot at Vernonia Lake.

- \$47,500 grant for feasibility/site analysis for Vernonia Visitor Information Center/City Hall.

- \$24,000 loan for weatherization at Cedar Ridge

Vernonia Lake will be stocked March 4

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will begin its 2002 North Coast Area Trout Stocking March 4, stocking Vernonia Pond with 2,000 catchable-size rainbow trout.

Subsequent stocking dates for Vernonia Lake will be March 18, April 8, April 29, and May 13.

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