

The INDEPENDENT

Vol. 21, No. 18

"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

September 21, 2006

Learning Center opens



Photo by Rebecca Jensen

State Representative Brad Witt performed the ribbon cutting honors for the official opening of the Vernonia Community Learning Center. The September 16 opening continued with refreshments and live entertainment. For more information on Learning Center activities, please see page 12.

Council, public take tour of Wastewater project

Before the regular Vernonia City Council meeting of September 18, the city held a tour of the Wastewater Rehabilitation Project for interested parties. About 15 people met at the main pump station by the lagoons to hear Preston Van Meter and Jennifer Coker of Kennedy/Jenks Engineering talk about the project.

Phase I of the project calls for larger pumps at the main pump station, replacement of the dry well at the Mist Dr. pump station with a wet well (dry wells are not being used much anymore, due to OSHA safety issues), a small pump at the lagoon station which is currently gravity fed (and as a result, tends to stop up once or twice a year) and a new headworks to screen paper and other non-biodegradables to go to landfill. Phase I cost is around \$4 million and is designed for the estimated 20 year flow rate, though the equipment and, if well maintained, could last up to 40 plus years. This phase

should be completed in February 2007, and may cause some traffic diversions while they install a forcemain line under a portion of Bridge St.

Plans for Phase II of the project, with an estimated cost of \$5.6 million, have not been finalized. What is known about Phase II is that it will include storage, either by yard piping, raising lagoon walls, and/or by lining the currently unlined lagoon; plus a chlorine contact chamber for final treatment; a laboratory/operations building for monitoring sites and chemical storage; plus membrane facilities to scrub the liquid and take out metals, and even some viruses, before final discharge or irrigation use.

The engineers, the city, and the Public Works Committee are looking at three options for Phase II. All the options being reviewed call for the final result to be a level IV effluent, which is clean enough to be used for irrigation. The hope is to bring

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Presentation on SDCs tells how they started and how they're used

The September 18, Vernonia City Council meeting started with a presentation on SDC's (System Development Charges) by Shaun Pigott, an SDC specialist. An SDC is a one-time charge for new users to recover the cost of new connections and added capacity to a city's systems—wastewater, sewer, streets, etc. Pigott spoke specifically about Vernonia's wastewater SDC.

Prior to 1987, Pigott explained, many Oregon cities had some form of new development fees. The 1989 Legislature passed the SDC Act, which set up the current system of SDC's used throughout

Oregon (which went into effect July 1, 1991).

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Cougar attacks mare in Creekview area

A cougar attacked an Arabian mare near Keasey Road, and Creekview Lane, on September 5. Livestock kept in open pastures appear to be safer than those in or near wooded areas.

If you see a cougar, or suspect a cougar attack, contact Rick Boatner, NW Region Assistant Director Wildlife Biologist at 503-621-3025, or OSP Wildlife Officer in St. Helens at 503-397-3131.

Rain eliminates water restrictions

The water emergency in Vernonia is over. When Vernonia city staff read the Rock Creek gauge on Wednesday, September 20, the flow was measured at 17.3 cfs. A water shortage emergency is declared when the flow decreases to 12 cfs or less.

Rains of the past week have brought the flows up and have even brought the first few Salmon up Rock Creek.

No restrictions on water use are in place at this time. The

**Dogs & Salmon
...a dangerous
combination
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**St. Mary's
36th Annual
Quilt Fair
Sept. 21-24, 2006
960 Missouri Ave.
Vernonia**