

The INDEPENDENT

Vol. 21, No. 23

"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

December 7, 2006

Wheee!



Vernonia students didn't have a single snow day during the last school year, but Mother Nature made up for it this month, providing snowy fun while closing school for two days last week.

Tours set to demonstrate watershed enhancement

The Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC) will be presenting tours of local restoration and enhancement projects during the second and third weeks of December. The tours are designed to showcase the successes of the UNWC, to educate local citizens about the projects and to give credit to the partners who made the projects possible. Tours will include completed projects and those in the planning stages.

The Upper Nehalem Watershed Council, established under The Governor's Coastal Salmon Restoration Initiative and House Bill 3441, is a non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to the protection, preservation, enhancement and restoration of the Nehalem Watershed. The council was formed to share information, reduce duplication of activities, help address watershed management issues in the Upper Nehalem Watershed and provide a framework for coordination and cooperation among key interests.

All projects have been done with the cooperation of local landowners, small woodlot owners, industrial land managers, city and county governments and state agencies. Work was performed as part of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. Total dollars managed through the UNWC are \$900,000 in grants and \$400,000 in matching funds, making a total contribution to the local economy of \$1,300,000. Projects benefited the local economy by hiring local contractors, supporting local businesses and increasing property values by creating improvements to local property.

For more information regarding these tours, please call Maggie Peyton at 503-429-2401 or Cindy Ball at 503-429-6033.

**For special
Holiday Events,
please see
Pages 11 & 15**

City hikes sewer rate \$12

At the Vernonia City Council November 20 meeting, council unanimously approved a sewer rate increase of \$12.00 per month to take effect January 1, 2007. This rate increase will be used to repay a \$500,000 loan that was used for planning Phase I of the wastewater treatment plant upgrades. When the loan is repaid, in August 2011, the rate increase will be removed. City Administrator Dick Kline told council that the city has received a Community Development Block Grant for \$548,113 which will be used to pay for Phase II planning, so rates won't need to be raised for that part of the project.

In response to a comment from the audience on the Mayor's Ball, Mayor Sally Harrison responded that though money may be borrowed from the city for the ball, all monies will be repaid by fees paid by those attending, so the city (and public tax money) will not pay for this event.

Tim Wilson, from Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), presented concepts being reviewed for changes to take place at the Staley's Junction interchange. Construction is estimated to be completed in 2011. There will be another public meeting to present the final decision on what type of construction will take place, be

Please see page 5

Results unchanged in ballot recount

Vernonia City Council candidate Michael Seager, who missed being elected by four votes less than Brett Costley, requested a recount of ballots for the November 7 election.

The recount, conducted December 1 by Elections Supervisor Pam Benham at the Columbia County Courthouse, determined that Costley actually won by five votes, not four.

Because the difference between the two candidates was more than one-half of one percent, the recount was not automatic. Seager was charged \$60 for the two hour recount.

County plans transportation study

Columbia County wants to know whether available public transportation is meeting the needs of the county's residents.

In order to find out, the county has contracted for a community survey of public transportation services in the county.

The survey will be used to determine where public transportation is working well, whether enhancements are needed in some areas and whether there are unmet transportation needs.

The survey will utilize several methods to contact county residents. A telephone survey will be coordinated with printed

survey questionnaires that will be placed at various locations around the county.

The telephone survey will be conducted between December 11 and December 22, 2006. An analysis of the results will be completed in January of 2007.

In order to find out what is needed, the county is encouraging people to participate if they are called or are asked to complete a questionnaire. Any county resident who would like to participate may call 1-503-397-1035.

Acti-dyne Survey Research, a St. Helens company, specializes in market research.