

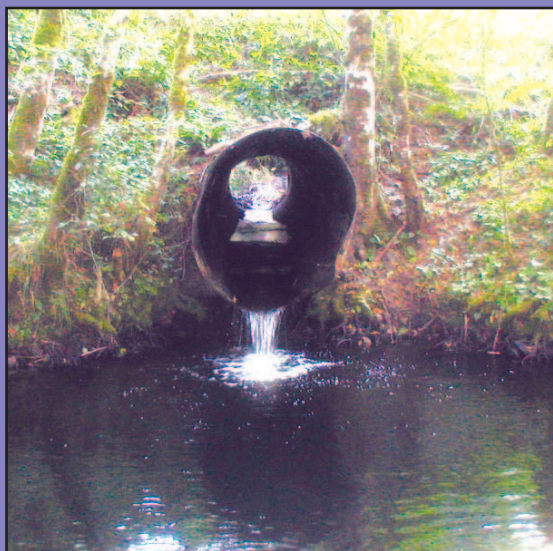
The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

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Back to Nature



Cedar Creek, a tributary of the Nehalem River, is open to salmon and other migrating fish after a habitat and access project replaced an old culvert on timberland. See article below.

Watershed project restores fish access

Local efforts to remove salmon migration barriers and restore essential stream habitat continues in the Nehalem watershed, as access to 2.2 miles of native salmon spawning, rearing and refuge habitat was restored, and one mile of habitat improved this summer in Cedar Creek. Cedar Creek is a tributary of the upper Nehalem, located 11.5 miles downstream from Vernonia.

In 2004, Forest Systems and the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC) formed a restoration partnership that has resulted in salmon access and habitat improvements to Cedar Creek, native Coho, Steelhead and Cutthroat Trout-bearing stream within the upper Nehalem basin.

For the first time in more than 20 years, migrating Coho salmon were able to access improved habitat in Cedar Creek, the result of a project that involved the removal of two undersized culverts and the placement of large wood in stream

The first culvert, located

near the mouth of the creek, was replaced with a 60 foot bridge. The other culvert, located upstream at the mouth of a major tributary, was replaced with an open bottom arch.

Coho Salmon returning this winter from a four-year migration to the ocean were able to enter Cedar Creek to find improved habitat conditions along a one-mile stream reach. Six clusters of large trees, some with rootwads, were skillfully and strategically placed within the stream channel creating the potential for more pools and riffles and places for salmon to spawn, hide, rest and feed.

The watershed council reforestation crew, with the able-bodied assistance of the Columbia River Youth Conservation Corps, followed up with the installation of Western Red Cedar riparian plantings along the entire project reach, replacing the forest giants that once stood by – and in remembrance of the stream's name-sake.

The \$117,186.00 in grants that UNWC secured from the Oregon Watershed Enhance-

ment Board (OWEB), the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, and the Tillamook Estuary Partnership (TEP), combined with Forest Systems' valuable contribution of materials and labor, made it possible for the council to implement this project.

UNWC expressed thanks to the following organizations, agencies, contractors and individuals for their assistance with the Cedar Creek project: Forest Systems land manager Oliver Wolff; landowner Bascom Pacific; OWEB Tom Shafer and technical review team members; NRCS engineer Christ Fisher, conservationist Don Melhoff, WHIP program managers Bill White and Louise Davis, cultural resource specialist Jenna Jastone and fish biologist Debra Virgovic; ODFW restoration biologists Troy Goby and Michele Long; TEP Director Mark Trenholm and project manager Rachel Warner; Schinnell Surveying of Chehalis, Washington; Roscoe

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City and insurance company pay \$23,000 to settle Seager law suit, plus attorney's fees

A lawsuit filed in December, 2005, by recent Vernonia City Council candidate Michael Seager against Donald Ray Stevens and Dana Kory Andersen, was dismissed November 15, 2006, after a settlement was reached between Seager, Vernonia Mayor Sally Harrison and the City of Vernonia's Insurer (CIS).

The settlement acknowledges that neither the City of Vernonia, nor CIS were defendants in the suit, but at the time of the incidents referred to in the lawsuit, Dana Andersen was caretaker at the city-owned Airport Park.

CIS paid Seager \$20,000 dollars of the \$23,000 settlement, and the City of Vernonia paid \$3,000. The city also incurred attorney fees, estimated by one source as "about

\$8,000." It is unknown whether the city's insurance rates will be increased as a result of the settlement.

The original lawsuit alleged that Dana Andersen called the police and accused Seager of theft of services from the City of Vernonia, and another time called the police and the mayor and accused Seager of trespass. According to the suit, the "accusations were false and defamatory and that as a result of the accusations, Seager's reputation was tarnished, he was exposed to ridicule and contempt, he suffered extreme emotional distress, anxiety, and humiliation, and his use and enjoyment of his hangar and the airport was significantly reduced." Seager asked for damages totalling \$800,000 from Andersen.

Year in Review

No matter what size a community may be, a year's worth of review will include both good and bad. Here are a few items for your own interpretation:

- Jan. 7 – Meningococcal disease hits two Vernonia girls – both recover.
- Jan. 17 – Steve Whiteman appointed to city council position vacated by Shirley Goodman.
- Jan. 26 – Dr. Albert Davidian named interim 47J school district superintendent.
- Feb. 6 – First waste water project workshop held.
- Apr. 4 – Generous citizens step up donations after burglar steals \$1,000 from Vernonia Cares.
- Apr. 10 – City Administrator Robyn Bassett and Mayor Sally Harrison go to Washington, D.C. (using their own money) seeking help with waste water project costs.

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