

Business Notes

SWCD seeking funds to stabilize streambanks in local watersheds

Landowners in Columbia and Clatsop Counties who face potential damage to their homes or other structures due to streambank destabilization and sediment- and debris-choked streams resulting from the December floods still have an opportunity to apply for emergency assistance.

Until February 29, the Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will evaluate sites impacted by recent severe weather to pre-determine eligibility for funding requested through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program.

"It is critical that we are ready to act if the funds are secured," said Scott Gall of the Columbia SWCD.

The EWP program is authorized by Congress to stabilize damaged watersheds in order to protect lives and property in the aftermath of natural disasters and natural occurrences. All work is undertaken with a government sponsor, such as the Columbia SWCD, and must

be determined to be economically and environmentally defensible.

The Columbia SWCD has requested EWP funds of approximately \$900,000 in financial assistance through the US Department of Agriculture.

The Columbia SWCD is one of more than 20 project sponsors nationwide with current requests to the federal government for EWP funding. A variety of factors, including the availability of funds and severity of damage in various parts of the country, affect whether EWP dollars will be directed to the local area.

"We cannot say for certain that we will receive the funding," said Gall, "but if we do, we need to be prepared, knowing where and how to proceed so that we help as many local people as possible."

Individuals interested in getting their names on the list should contact the Columbia SWCD at 503-397-4555 before February 29.

Flood insurance information provided

From page 4

One greatly appreciated explanation, however, was that the new map cannot be used to rate properties until it has been through the adoption process. Until that happens (in August, at the earliest, and more likely some time next year), the 1988 map applies. That explanation reduced my annual premium by more than \$1000, making it an affordable \$249.

Another element used in setting the premium rate is the year your home was built. If your home, like mine, was built

before the 1988 map was used to set flood insurance rates (pre-FIRM), your premium should reflect that with a low "grandfathered" rate, even if you are in the high flood risk "A" zone.

This doesn't mean the rate will never increase. As with any area of insurance, the premium rate increases as cost of coverage increases.

Flood insurance rates for homes built after the 1988 map (post-FIRM) will reflect the hazard level shown on the map. As

Please see page 14

Flood claims deadline extended

From page 1

- Copies of contractors' estimates to repair the damage; and/or

- Other documentation detailing rebuilding expenses.

Once the insurance company or flood insurance program receives the additional documentation, an adjuster will meet with the homeowner and/or contractor to identify the issues and negotiate an appro-

priate settlement.

Homeowners should keep a copy of the Proof of Loss—and copies of all supporting documents—for their records. To stay covered for the future, they must renew their policy each year. Most policyholders living in areas where the flood risk has increased can renew at the same lower rate, based on their previous flood zone.

ODOT program designed for small contractors

The Oregon Department of Transportation has launched a statewide program aimed at increasing contracting opportunities for small businesses in Oregon. ODOT's Small Contracting Program for Construction will make it possible for small construction companies across Oregon to do business with the agency as prime contractors.

ODOT designed its new program to help contractors in two ways. By identifying small projects, or dividing larger projects into contracts valued at \$100,000 or less, the agency is making more work available to small contractors. And by pre-qualifying companies, ODOT can help small businesses compete more effectively by issuing notification to those companies when projects are open for bid.

"Through the Small Contracting Program, ODOT is supporting Oregon's economy by building sustainability for small businesses," said Matt Garrett, ODOT director. "Additionally, it creates an opportunity for ODOT to tap into the experience and expertise of Oregon's small companies as we work to build a stronger transportation system."

Contractors may pre-qualify by completing the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process. They will then be included in the selection pool for future program contract bid opportunities.

The RFQ is now available at the Oregon Procurement Information Network Web site at

Unemployment rate

Columbia County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was essentially unchanged at 6.1 percent in December from the previous month (5.9%) and from one year before (5.8%). The rate was a little above the statewide rate (5.6%) and higher than the national rate (5.0%). Total employment fell by 116 to 23,176 and the number of unemployed people increased by 27 to 1,457. Total employment this December was 474 more than one year before and there were 72 more people unemployed this year.

<http://orpin.oregon.gov> and on the ODOT Procurement Office – Construction Web site at www.oregon.gov/ODOT/CS/CONSTRUCTION/.

It consists of a short, three-part form that requests basic information, such as a construction company's location, employees and experience.

Pre-qualification is not a guarantee of work, but it does ensure that a company is eligible to participate in the program, depending on its capabilities, location and the type of work available. ODOT will award contracts based on low bid. Depending on the number of construction contractors pre-

qualified for a given type of work, the agency may give preference to a company that has never worked as a prime contractor with the agency before.

The new program builds on the Small Contracting Program for Professional and Technical Services, which launched statewide in September 2007 following a one-year pilot program in the Portland metropolitan area.

For more information, visit ODOT's Office of Civil Rights Small Business Support Web site at www.oregon.gov/ODOT/CS/CIVILRIGHTS/small_business.shtml.

SAVE FOR YOUR FUTURE Open an IRA Savings Account Today

rates as high as

3.75% APY*



We have made saving for your future easy! IRA Savings Accounts are a high yield account with flexibility and convenience.

There are two types of IRAs to choose from:

**Traditional IRA
Roth IRA**

At Wauna Federal Credit Union, IRA accounts are federally insured up to \$250,000 by NCUA. Consult your tax advisor then contact your local branch for more IRA Information.



Wauna Federal Credit Union

Your hometown financial solution

800.773.3236 www.waunafcu.org

Astoria Clatskanie St Helens Vernonia Warrenton
325.1044 728.4321 366.1334 429.8031 861.7526

* Members of WFCU only. Rate shown applies to balances \$60,000 or greater. Rates are tiered for other balances. All rates are Annual Percentage Yields and subject to change. IRA Account restrictions apply and a fee is assessed on external IRA transfers. IRS penalties may be assessed on withdrawals.