

## Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer, General Manager,  
West Oregon Electric Cooperative



### WOEC Headquarters Relocation Project Reconsidered

The building of new Headquarters facilities had been put on hold by the Board of Directors of West Oregon Electric Cooperative, Inc., due to the uncertainty in the present economy. However, the Board was officially notified at its November Board meeting that, since the Co-op was 80% damaged as a result of the 2007 flood, WOEC would have to relocate its facilities outside the floodplain to be in compliance with the City of Vernonia's Ordinance #851/Title 9 Land Use & Development.

WOEC will not be given the option of flood prevention measures due to being an essential service, being flooded twice within an 11 year span, and the severity (percentage) of the damage to our facilities. It has been proposed in a mitigation grant that West Oregon EC be offered \$1,078,063 to relocate, and must do so within three years of accepting the buyout amount. Should WOEC not accept the mitigation funds and be hit with a third occurrence, under proposed changes in federal guidelines for FEMA, we would receive only 25% reimbursement instead of the current 75%.

With no other options available, combined with the risk of losing available funding that would significantly reduce the costs of a new facility outside the floodplain, the WOEC Board of Directors has reconsidered its position and decided to move forward on the construction of new Headquarter facilities. The selected building site will be within the city limits of Vernonia and well above the 2007 floodplain.

The silver lining in the delay of moving forward with the building was the significant reduction in construction costs. The cost of the new facility has dropped from an initial bid of \$4.6 million, to \$3.8 million, to a current bid of \$2.8 million, saving our members a huge amount of funding. While the economy makes it a bad time to build, funding-wise, it also makes it a good time to build cost wise. The building project will also help stimulate the local economy by providing much needed jobs. It is the Co-op's intent to hire local builders and use as much local products and services as possible to enhance the local economy. We will communicate more about the project as we move through the building process.

### Mini Mart donation helps food bank

Vernonia Cares Food Bank received a \$1,000 donation from Bridge Street Mini Mart. Pictured is Toni Barton transferring the check to Vernonia Cares Food Bank Treasurer, Josette Mitchell. "The food bank had double duty this month," Mitchell noted. "We as-

sist over 400 people per month with emergency food boxes plus in December we gave away 185 Christmas meal food boxes. This generous check will allow us to continue to feed hungry people in and around Vernonia. Thanks so much!" she concluded.

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
is February 18**

# Are amphibians and timber connected?

Research conducted in the Pacific Northwest provides new insights on the effect of forest management activities on stream-associated amphibians, and a new publication from the Oregon Forest Resources Institute offers a synthesis of recent findings.

Wildlife in Managed Forests: Stream-Associated Amphibians, is OFRI's latest publication, and it synthesizes the latest science findings to help forest managers, fish and wildlife experts, conservation organizations, regulators and policy-makers to develop more effective practices and plans to protect amphibian habitat on managed forestlands.

According to the research, protection schemes in place for fish habitat may not, by themselves, be effective for some amphibian species. Targeted and site-specific measures might be needed to protect them. For instance, instead of a one-size-fits-all approach to forested buffers along streams, land managers might be encouraged to leave wider buffers in areas amphibians are more likely to inhabit, and leave no buffers elsewhere.

Though not yet conclusive, recent studies have expanded scientists' understanding on how a significant number of Northwest amphibian species rely on perennial and seasonal headwater streams, while others rely on forested riparian habitat. Studies using refined methodology are also yielding insights into aspects of amphibian habitat, population dynamics and responses to habitat disruption.

Stream-Associated Amphibians is the third in OFRI's "Wildlife in Managed Forests" series, joining Elk and Northern Spotted Owl. These booklets are recommended reading for forest managers but have proven especially popular with owners of small- and medium-size forestlands, who do not have staff biologists to interpret complex science.

The publication grew out of a joint symposium held by the Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology and the Washington Chapter of the Wildlife Society in February, 2009, at Ska-



One of the amphibians referred to in recent publication on amphibians and forest management activities.

mania Lodge in Stevenson, Wash. free online or downloaded at OFRI's Web site at oregon-

Publications can be ordered forests.org.

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