

Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project



District Manager's Message

It's been enormously satisfying to see construction get under way at Reeder Road and Dairy Creek! While we've been working toward this point for many years, seeing it actually happen is what we've all been waiting for.

In this third newsletter, we provide details on our fish salvage operation to make sure fish trapped in Dairy Creek at the construction site were caught and transported to freedom in the Columbia River. Also read more about the bypass road, which delivers traffic on NW Reeder Road around the construction area for the duration of the project, and the removal of debris and garbage that has plugged Dairy Creek over the years. These are just some of the many aspects of the project that will restore habitat for fish and wildlife in Sturgeon Lake and Dairy Creek.

We had a great day at our informal project groundbreaking ceremony in early July, complete with the traditional “turning of the dirt” (in this case, it was a turning of the silt in Dairy Creek!) and a ceremony through Native-American song about rivers, establishing the historical and cultural significance of the project.

Finally, we’d like to introduce you to Fritz Paulus, Attorney at Law, who has helped the District navigate through the myriad of complicated legal issues involved in the Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project, especially those underlying the necessary real estate transactions with cooperating landowners. He’s been a clear head and steady hand throughout the process and a great partner in conservation.

Jim Cathcart, District Manager, West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

Groundbreaking!

On Monday July 2nd, the District gathered project partners and funders at the Sauvie Island Grange hall for an informal project groundbreaking lunch. Attendees were treated to a presentation by WMSWCD Rural Conservationist, Scott Gall, on key milestones that had brought the project to this point in time including a summary of the project’s goals and key project features such as the full spanning bridge and restoration of the Dairy Creek channel. We were pleased that Senator Betsy Johnson and Multnomah County Commissioner Sharon Meieran were on hand to join us. Afterwards, attendees headed out to Dairy Creek for the groundbreaking ceremony.

Once on location, Scott described plans for unplugging the creek and installing a debris boom at the mouth of the creek to prevent further debris and garbage from entering the channel. He then introduced Teresa Montana, Wisdom of the Elders executive assistant, who talked about the historical and cultural significance of the area to Native-



Americans. Teresa introduced her daughter, Simone' Florendo, who sang a Native song about the significance of rivers to Native-American people.



We gave the groundbreaking honor to the two men who've spent the most time and energy on the project: West Multnomah SWCD board member, Brian Lightcap, who's worked on various iterations of the Sturgeon Lake restoration since the original project failed in the 1996 flood, and former District Manager Dick Springer, who spearheaded the fundraising for and shepherded

development of the current restoration project.

Construction Update

Construction on Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project officially began on July 2nd, 2018. The initial focus was to build the temporary bypass road allowing traffic to flow in both directions on Reeder Road where it passes over Dairy Creek. This part of the project, which seeks to reconnect Sturgeon Lake to the Columbia River, will replace two failing culverts with a full-span bridge as well as remove over 30 years of accumulated sediment and woody debris within Dairy Creek.



Before construction began, the portion of Dairy Creek within the construction site had to be isolated to prevent sediment and other material stirred up during construction from getting into Sturgeon Lake or the Columbia River. Once temporary dams were installed to accomplish this, WMSWCD assisted Columbia River Estuary Task Force (CREST) and the Oregon Department of

Fish and Wildlife (OFDW) to save any fish that were trapped. Over the course of two days, 2,300 fish were caught and released back into the wild. While most of these fish were non-native, warm water species (such as largemouth bass, carp, sunfish, catfish, and others) the team also captured 26 wild, juvenile Chinook salmon. Given the late time period of the fish salvage (June 28th and July 5th) the presence of young salmon was unexpected. Experts on site suspect the fish may have been trapped behind the failing culverts after the high water of May and likely would not have survived otherwise. All 26 Chinook were transported and released in the Columbia River and eagerly swam away!

Since July 2nd, Elting Northwest Inc., has moved 4,000 cubic yards of soil to build an embankment off the side of the existing roadway. This created a new pathway for the road that winds around the site of the future bridge. This two-lane, paved bypass road will keep traffic flowing in both directions at all times throughout the project. However, the speed limit is reduced from 45 mph to 25 through the construction zone. Also expect short delays (less than 15 minutes) when construction equipment is move on and off the site. The District has secured a variable message sign, which is installed at the east end of the Sauvie Island bridge, to alert motorists of possible delays at the construction site. Construction is proceeding smoothly and work on the bridge is expected to wrap up around September 30th.





While the spotlight of the project is definitely the Reeder Road bridge, the debris and sediment that has clogged Dairy Creek for over 20 years is just as important to the success of the restoration project. During the fish salvage activities near the bridge site, the contractor began removing the lumber, logs, and garbage that has floated into Dairy Creek. This material has been sorted and while some of it will be used for “habitat features” later on, the vast majority will be chipped and disposed of offsite. A floating debris boom or deflector is planned for the mouth of the creek, mainly to prevent logs from jamming Dairy Creek again, however preventing garbage (tires, barrels,

flip flops, plastic bottles and old boats) from entering the creek and therefore Sturgeon Lake is also key to protecting the habitat that will be reopened to fish and wildlife.

Project Spotlight: Fritz Paulus, Attorney at Law



As a native Oregonian who’s been intimately involved in land and water issues throughout his career, Fritz Paulus brings a unique set of skills and experiences to his work with West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District. Paulus understands the complicated language of things like land easements and water rights, both of which are woven into his work with the District’s Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project. But his

connection to land and water and to rural landowners run deep and long.

Growing up, his family would pile into the car most weekends to experience Oregon's natural beauty. They all hiked, skied, river-rafted and basically immersed themselves in the valleys, mountains and rivers of the northwest. Paulus says he used to stare at Oregon tourism brochures and think — “this is a magical place!” His love of the outdoors came easily and was reinforced by his conservation-minded parents, William and Norma Paulus. He spent many vacations at iconic Oregon events, like the Pendleton Round-up, as his mother campaigned for statewide office (Norma Paulus served as a State Representative, then two-terms as Oregon Secretary of State, 1977–1985). Paulus has a special affinity for the smaller northwest towns he visited as a boy and has since worked with clients with properties in rural areas such as Tillamook, Lincoln, Wasco, Hood River, and Wallowa counties.

Graduating from Whitman College and the University of Oregon Law School, Paulus spent his early law career as a public defender for Multnomah County, helping those with few resources sort through the myriad of offenses they faced. After four years in indigent defense, in 1996 he accepted the position of Assistant Attorney General with the Department of Justice where, for the next three years, he concentrated on analyzing and answering legal challenges brought by inmates of the state's prison system. But that wasn't the work he was passionate about.

Throughout his professional life, Paulus volunteered for a number of environmental organizations, such as Friends of Trees and the Columbia Land Trust, and realized that conservation law was where he wanted to be. So he joined Metro to work on real estate negotiation from 2001 to 2003 and then again from 2008 to 2012. In between stints at Metro, he served as Executive Director of Oregon Water Trust for five years. This gave him a wide array of skills and experience in land use, real estate and water law, which served as a great foundation for his true dream of starting his own law firm. In 2012, Paulus struck out on his own, attracting a wide variety of public, private and non-profit clients looking for his unique skill set in natural resource law. Looking back, Paulus jokes that his shift from “trials to trails” was the best move he made.

Paulus' work with organizations dedicated to conserving and protecting Oregon's natural landscape continues today. He's passionate about things like preserving a heritage oak tree in Portland, helping with acquisition of land for a coastal estuary restoration project, and assisting the owners of a century farm transfer family ownership. Paulus says his upbringing gives him a deep understanding of how rural Oregonians view the land and how important it is to them. What gives him the greatest joy and satisfaction, he says, is to work with people from all walks of life on projects that will leave a lasting mark on the landscape.

Thankfully, for all of us, the Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project is such an opportunity.

"When coming on board for this project, I was excited to learn that Fritz was the project's real estate attorney since I knew the quality Fritz brings to the table from having served with him on the Board of Directors for Friends of Trees in the late 1990's," says Jim Cathcart, District Manager. "This project could not have been any more complicated on the real estate front with the need to acquire both temporary construction and permanent conservation easement interests in property from 4 private landowners, two state agencies and one Multnomah County right-of-way. Fritz really delivered by pulling it all together."

Proposed Timeline

October, 2017 – invasive vegetation removal completed

July, 2018 – by-pass road installed, culvert removal, bridge construction begins

August/September, 2018 – bridge and channel work

October/November, 2018 – project completed, final site cleanup, native riparian plantings

February, 2019 – additional native riparian plants installed

We will let you know how the project is proceeding in future newsletters, so stay tuned! Updates will also be available at our website, wmswcd.org/sturgeonlake. Please let us know if we can answer any of your questions at sturgeonlake@wmswcd.org.

Thank you for your participation and interest in restoring this spectacular lake for all to enjoy!

*Compiled by Carolyn Myers Lindberg, Communications Coordinator
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