



Slough News

Newsletter of the Columbia Slough Watershed Council

Summer 2009

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Inside this issue:

3rd Annual Great Slough Clean Up	2
Volunteer at Aquifer Adventure	2
Explorando 2009	3
15th Annual Regatta	4
Slough School	5
Restoration at Whitaker Ponds	5
Get Involved	6

A special thanks to Haley Dillon, our LINKS AmeriCorps member who has been helping out with our summer events. She has managed all the volunteers at Explorando and Regatta, and finishes her good work with Aquifer Adventure this September.

A New Watershed Education Center By Jane Van Dyke

The Columbia Slough Watershed Council operates its education, stewardship, and outreach programs at Whitaker Ponds Nature Park in Northeast Portland. Our current office is a former residence that is approximately 800 square feet. We are working with Portland Parks and Recreation to relocate to the former Bunn house, an unoccupied building at Whitaker Ponds. We plan to remodel this house as our *Watershed Education Center*. This well-planned center will be over 1600 square feet of space including a multipurpose room with a separate entrance, ADA accessibility, three offices, and a small meeting space. Unlike our current large room, the multipurpose room could accommodate up to 30 people. It will serve as meeting space for monthly council meetings, training sessions for volunteers, and workshops to teach adults more about the watershed.

Thanks to a generous Grassroots Grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust, a contribution from the Oregon Community Foundation from a fund set up by the Bunns and contributions from other organizations, businesses, and individuals we have raised the funds to begin the remodel. Local architect David Kennedy created a renovation plan and display board. Board members Chuck Harrison, Eric Wentland, and Susan Barthel tracked down volunteer professionals, including architects, plumbers, and electricians. We are also working with Nicolle Gardiner, a recent graduate in design, and students from the Architecture, Construction, and Engineering Academy.

We plan to create a space that will serve the Council and staff for many years. We will repair and upgrade the electrical service, install ADA accessible exterior and interiors doors, relocate a sink and toilet for an ADA accessible restroom, add more ceiling insulation, remove baseboards and install new heaters in all rooms, remove worn carpets and install hard surface flooring,

paint the exterior and interior, clean the roof, repair the gutters, install storage shelves for education and stewardship materials and supplies, and build display shelves for our pelts, skulls, and display birds.

You can help us complete this project! Plan to attend a volunteer work party this autumn, share your remodeling skills, and/or make a financial contribution. Visit our website www.columbiaslough.org to make a contribution and to find out about volunteer opportunities. Look for more exciting updates on this project in upcoming months.



This exterior rendering and layout, from architect David Kennedy, illustrate the Council's vision for a new Watershed Education Center.

The 3rd Annual Great Slough Clean Up

By Nathaniel Talbot

Passersby were likely a bit startled to find nearly two tons of muck-covered garbage lying in the middle of the meadow at Whitaker Ponds Nature Park this July. Those who braved a closer inspection were sure to find further surprises: Among the bedraggled heap lay a car chassis, twin mattress, tricycle, 50 gallon drum of diesel oil, and an expansive collection of 1980's latin pop cassette tapes. A pile of such size and variety could be the result of only one thing: The Columbia Slough Watershed Council's 3rd Annual Great Slough Clean Up!

On July 11th, 30 volunteers congregated at the Whitaker Slough dock and piled into canoes, kayaks and bimarans (2 canoes strapped together with 2x6s and topped with a large plywood platform for maximum carrying capacity). The stalwart crew hit the water with the mission of

removing as much refuse from the muck and brambles of Whitaker Slough as humanly possible. The kayakers, with their speed and agility, scoured the banks for small debris such as cans and Styrofoam while the bimaranners, in a demonstration of supreme teamwork and Hulk-like strength, targeted the car engines, bowling balls and mini-fridges. The most audacious sometimes found themselves hip-deep in muck in order to retrieve their prize.

The event was the latest chapter in a 10-year effort to help return Whitaker Slough to its natural state. For years this backwater channel has collected illegally dumped garbage, but the Council, with help from Metro and the City of Portland, has taken significant steps toward restoring Whitaker Slough. Private Slough-side landowners have also begun demonstrating greater stewardship and pride for their waterway. Today, while some trash remains, the Whitaker Slough has again become home to a diversity of native fish, birds, turtles ... and paddlers!



34 happy, muddy, and tired volunteers celebrate their hard work at the Great Slough Clean Up in July.

A special thanks to Steve Cameron, who took a day off of work to construct us a new set of bimaran boards and improved platforms. These new tools helped us maximize our trash-removal efforts!

Volunteer at Aquifer Adventure!

By Haley Dillon

Unlock your inner pirate with a fun afternoon at Aquifer Adventure! You can help set up, load canoes, lead groundwater education activities, or hand out prizes to enthusiastic young pirates. Volunteer shifts generally run from 11:30am to 4pm, and you'll get a free t-shirt, great snacks, and a shiver-me-timbers satisfaction for your afternoon of fun work.

Aquifer Adventure is a free, family-friendly afternoon of fun, pirates, and groundwater education. We offer live

music, canoe rides, games, prizes, and even fake sword fights with a real live pirate. You can make this afternoon one to remember by volunteering your time and putting on your best pirate grin!

For more information on volunteering at Aquifer Adventure: contact Haley at 503-956-8558 or events@columbiaslough.org. We couldn't hold this event without the help of 40 dedicated volunteers - that means YOU!

8th Annual Explorando

By Melissa Sandoz

Explorando el Columbia Slough, a bilingual nature festival for families, is an annual favorite for the Council. This year's June event was no exception, with over 400 attendees, live entertainment, free t-shirts, canoe rides, live birds, and hands-on nature activities. Younger visitors enjoyed having their face painted and engaging in mural decoration for the gazebo at Whitaker Ponds. Older visitors appreciated the information on recycling, free raffle prizes, and a take-home container garden.

The Council is proud to host this wonderful event each year, in partnership with many sponsors and presenting organizations. Explorando is a community event, and it is wonderful to see local organizations and businesses offer their support wholeheartedly. A special thanks to our 55 volunteers, who utilized all their language skills to provide a fabulous experience for our visitors.

Thanks to all our Explorando Sponsors!

City of Gresham Watershed Management Division

City of Portland:
*Bureau of Environmental Services
 Portland Parks and Recreation
 Portland Water Bureau*

East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District

Halton Company

Oregon Screen Impressions

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

REI

Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel

Squires & Lopez, Attorneys at Law

Willamette River Fun(d) of the Oregon Community Foundation

Verde NW



Isabel Cruz and Rachel Studer, two dedicated members of the Explorando Planning Committee, help a visitor construct a vegetable container garden to take home.



Education Director Sheilagh Diez helps two young visitors learn about aquatic macroinvertebrates.

Performances this year included prehispanica aztec dance, music by Bajos Salarios, storytelling by Omar Vargas, and dancing by Ballet Folklorico Sol Azteca.



15th Annual Columbia Slough Regatta

By Melissa Sandoz

The docks were busy all morning as happy paddlers launched into the Slough, or returned from their 45-minute complimentary boat rental.



The 15th Annual Regatta was a special celebration of the Columbia Slough. On Sunday, July 26th, over 480 people came to the St Johns Launch to enjoy a paddle on the Slough. Despite temperatures in the 90s, visitors stayed cool with a mister constructed by Steve Luna with the Multnomah County Drainage Districts, or by chatting with community organizations under a shady tent. A total of 183 canoes and kayaks were launched that morning into the lower Slough, of which 92 of them were complimentary rentals provided by the Council, Willamette Riverkeeper, and Alder Creek Kayak & Canoe.

As a special treat this year, 30 visitors enjoyed a guided tour of the former St Johns Landfill, thanks to support from Metro and the City of Portland. They learned about management practices for the landfill, and got a close-up look at a bald eagle nest. Because of our sponsors and partnering organizations, the Council is able to offer special recreational opportunities like the Regatta to our watershed neighbors.

Thanks to our wonderful Regatta Sponsors!

Alder Creek Kayak & Canoe

aloft Portland Airport at Cascade Station

City of Gresham Watershed Management

City of Portland Environmental Services

East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

Metro

Multnomah County Drainage Districts

Multnomah County Sheriff's Office

Portland Water Bureau

Port of Portland

Oregon Screen Impressions

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

The Boeing Company

Willamette River Fun(d) of the Oregon Community Foundation

Willamette Riverkeeper

Council member Bob Dolphin helps a young visitor into a canoe, for his first paddling trip on the Slough. Bob was one of 50 volunteers who helped this year's Regatta run smoothly.



Slough School Update

By Sheilagh Diez

The Slough School Education Program ended the school year in June with field trips, canoe rides, and special projects planned for this fall. Over the course of the year, a total of 5,100 student contacts and 752 adult contacts participated in Slough School activities! Students from 46 different schools across four school districts were involved. Many thanks to the teachers, students, volunteers and community partners who helped to make this year a success!

Slough School is the hands-on educational program for students attending school within the boundaries of the Columbia Slough Watershed. Students participate in classroom activities,

field trips and watershed action projects. Topics include water chemistry, animal adaptations, native plants, food webs, and watersheds.

In addition to direct teaching, we also work with local high school groups to provide leadership opportunities and offer natural history workshops for teachers. We are always looking for volunteers to assist with programming (particularly the winter planting season!). If you are a teacher working within the Slough boundaries and interested in programming for the 2009-2010 school year, please contact Sheilagh Diez, Slough School Director. We'll see you at the Slough!



Sheilagh teaches younger students about watersheds, using a brand-new puppet theatre as a teaching tool. The watershed theatre will be introduced to k-2nd grade students throughout the coming school year.

Restoration at Whitaker Ponds

By Nathaniel Talbot

As any local gardener, botanist or field worker would attest, the recent summer scorch has served as inspiration to a fresh army of non-native weeds. Here at Whitaker Ponds, the Columbia Slough Watershed Council been working hard to abate the encroachments of blackberry, morning glory and teasel into our newly-planted restoration areas. At times the task can seem a bit daunting, like fighting your way out of Hades with a butter knife, only thornier. Luckily, this summer we've have two fantastic community groups come to aid us in this noble battle against the weeds.

Due to an enlightened allocation of recent stimulus funds, local homeless youth organization Outside In was able to select and employ a summer field work crew of six young adults. The crew chose Whitaker Ponds as on of its work sites and since late June has been making weekly visits to help the council with its laundry list of summer stewardship projects. Whether it's hacking and sheet mulching blackberry patches, weed-whacking yellow flag

iris or hand-pulling nasty teasel, the crew has approached each of their given tasks with purpose, and shown impressive results. Thanks Outside In!



This garden area by the Bunn house was head-high with weeds earlier this summer, but now is mulched over thanks to the dedication of the Outside In work crew.

Also serving on the front lines of weed control has been our Eyes on the Slough volunteers. These on-the-water watchdogs have been paddling their adopted reach of the slough, mapping and reporting all occurrences of invasive Japanese Knotweed. They are helping the Council, in partnership with the City of Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services, to collect baseline data on this species' distribution along the Slough's waterways. Once compiled, the data will inform the City of how to begin managing this species within the watershed.

Thanks to everyone who has volunteered their time to keep the weeds down! It is only with the help of these community members that we are able to continually improve habitat at Whitaker Ponds and the Columbia Slough.

GET INVOLVED - VISIT, PARTICIPATE, VOLUNTEER, ENJOY!

Volunteer at Stewardship Saturdays!

On the second Saturday of each month, from 9am until 12pm, volunteers gather to do great things for the Slough!

The good news: Nathaniel Talbot is returning for a second year of Stewardship Coordination with the Council! The bad news: there's a break in AmeriCorps terms, so he will be going on a much-deserved vacation instead of organizing Stewardship Saturday in September. Stewardship Saturdays will return with more restoration projects in October.

For more information: Call (503) 281-1132 or email nathaniel.talbot@columbiaslough.org

Mark your calendar for Stewardship Saturday fun!

October 10, November 14, December 12

Upcoming Events Calendar

For more information about Columbia Slough Watershed Council events, visit our website at www.columbiaslough.org.

Friday, August 14, 11:30am—1pm

Subs on the Slough

Join the Council and the Portland Water Bureau for a delicious lunch and discussion of the Groundwater Protection Program underway in our watershed.

Saturday, September 12, 12noon—4pm

Aquifer Adventure

Portland's only pirate-themed groundwater festival returns for an afternoon of games, canoe rides, live music, and pirate prizes! Bring the whole family.

Thursday, September 17, 9am—12noon

Slough Tour

Join the Council for a 5 mile walking tour along the Slough Trail and a light lunch.

Wednesday, October 7, 6—8:30pm

Evening Canoe the Slough

Sign up for this beautiful evening tour of Whitaker Slough. Bring your own canoe or kayak, or reserve one of the Council's.



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Melissa Sandoz, Outreach Director
Sheilagh Diez, Education Director
Nathaniel Talbot, Stewardship Coordinator
Haley Dillon, Community Outreach Specialist



Council Wish List

The Columbia Slough Watershed Council is on the hunt for:

- Well-functioning binoculars
- Small cooler
- Rakes
- Tool sharpener
- Child-sized PFDs

If you have something in good condition to donate, please contact us at 503-281-1132!