

Floodwaters Welcome at Circle Creek

By August, anyone driving Highway 101 south of Seaside between the Relief Pitcher Tavern and the curves at Peterson Point is likely to notice earth moving equipment working across the river. Those bulldozers will be carrying out a landmark project that will not only greatly enhance the wetlands habitat at NCLC's Circle Creek Habitat Reserve but should greatly decrease the chronic seasonal flooding problem on the highway.

The project is the result of years of study and planning and a little serendipity. A hydrologic study of the 364-acre Circle Creek property, done after the trust acquired the land in 2004, indicated that removal of a 4-foot-tall levee built years earlier along the Necanicum River's west bank would greatly enhance the wetland habitat there. It would allow the river to spread out into the floodplain during periods of winter high water, reconnecting that floodplain and reducing the velocity of the river. Such a project, however, would be very expensive.

Meanwhile, a Highway 101 Flood Study Consortium began meeting to look for solutions to the annual highway flooding problem south of Seaside. Additional studies suggested that removal of the levee would be the single action that would have the biggest impact. Engineers expect that, by allowing flood waters to gradually seep out over 100 acres of floodplain, the project will decrease water on the highway by as much as 12 inches, minimizing or even eliminating the problem most winters.

Who would pay for the project? *cont'd. on p.2*



Roosevelt elk and waterfowl share the seasonally saturated pasture at Circle Creek just south of Seaside.

On Conserved Land: What's the Story?

Wildlife are welcome on lands conserved by NCLC, but are people? Yes and no. NCLC's mission is focused on protecting the natural resource and cultural values of the land we hold in conservation. NCLC-conserved lands represent only a tiny fraction of Clatsop, Tillamook and Lincoln counties, yet those lands provide significant benefits to plants, animals, water, air and people that play out across the North Coast landscape and enrich all our lives. Some NCLC properties are either fully or partially open to the public, such as most of Neawanna Point on the Necanicum Estuary at the north edge of Seaside. NCLC is also working on plans to develop walking trails and welcome the public to a new Conservation Center at our 364-acre Circle Creek Habitat Reserve at Seaside's southern fringe. And NCLC provides opportunities for our supporters and members of the public to visit certain properties throughout the year.

However, most of the land conserved by NCLC is not normally open to the public. Why? *cont'd. on p.3*



Neal Maine explores new wildlife habitat at Stanley Marsh near Seaside.



Our Mission:

The North Coast Land Conservancy will serve as a resource for Northwest Oregon coastal communities and landowners to conserve and protect land in perpetuity for its ecological and cultural values.

Board of Directors

President

Doug Green

Vice-president

Tammi Lesh

Treasurer

Ron Logan

Secretary

Tom Horning

Members at Large

Randall Henderson

Doug Ray

Betsy Ayres

Kevin Brownlee

John Mersereau

Staff

Executive Director

Katie Voelke

Conservation Director

Jon Wickersham

Stewardship Director

Celeste Coulter

Outreach Coordinator

Teresa Retzlaff

P.O.Box 67

Seaside, OR 97138

(503) 738-9126

www.nclctrust.org

Title Photo: Bald Eagle Wave
©PacificLight Images/Neal Maine

Printed on 100%
post-consumer
recycled paper

Floodwaters cont'd. from p.1

Neither NCLC nor Clatsop County could quickly secure the funding for the project. ODOT's highway division would pay only for work done within the highway right-of-way. But as it happened, a different arm of ODOT was looking for wetland mitigation projects to fund. So NCLC hosted a meeting of the Flood Study Consortium with representatives of both the highway and wetlands mitigation branches of ODOT. "That's when it all came together," NCLC Executive Director Katie Voelke says. "Wetlands people already had this money budgeted and allocated. It's being totally funded by the need to create wetlands, but it will also implement the plan to reduce the water on the highway." The more than \$1 million price tag is a fraction of what ODOT would otherwise have spent on piecemeal actions to fix the problem, allowing the agency to stretch its 20-year highway improvement plan dollars much further.

This win-win project, scheduled to be carried out during the driest months of the year, will include planting of wetland and forest vegetation and placement of large woody debris to enhance the complexity of the wetland habitat.

Volunteer Spotlight: Leslie Ryan

Raised in Seattle, Leslie Ryan bounced between Puget Sound, Oregon's North Coast, and the Grand Tetons of Idaho and Wyoming before resettling in Cannon Beach in April 2004. In all those places, she has lived out her personal commitment to conservation and stewardship, joining Friends of Ecola Creek Forest Reserve and turning her Tetons property into a model for no-spray landscape restoration and eradication of invasive species. With her background and expertise in business, Leslie has contributed immeasurably (actually, with her help we can now measure it!) to NCLC's grant expense tracking process. Here Leslie talks about her involvement with NCLC.

"I had made modest financial contributions to NCLC for years. When I came back to Cannon Beach I was determined to really contribute. I found out about the Saturday Morning Stewardship work parties, which I began attending. I was then invited to assist NCLC with fiscal grant management. It's great to be able to use my professional talents to help as well! Recently I was honored to be invited to join the NCLC Stewardship Committee. At our first work party, I learned about and assisted in cataloguing and eradicating four invasive species new to me!

"The reasons I volunteer for NCLC are simple: The conservancy's mission is clear. Its staff and board members are knowledgeable and committed and they provide results. I embrace the listen-to-the-land approach to stewardship. NCLC works with numerous agencies, landowners and people to achieve common goals of conservation and stewardship. And they allow me to feel like I am contributing to achieving those goals!"

We couldn't do it without volunteers like you, Leslie. Many thanks for your support!



Leslie Ryan helping to prepare willow whips for planting at Stanley Marsh.

Photo: Celeste Coulter

On The Land: Walk & Paddle with NCLC!

New this year, On the Land programs provide you with the opportunity to visit many North Coast conserved lands on outings guided by NCLC staff and volunteers. Join us any of more than a dozen walks and paddle trips planned May through October on protected lands scattered throughout Clatsop and northern Tillamook counties.

On the Land outings are free but require preregistration. Group size is limited to 12 people per trip to assure a quality experience and to lessen the impact we have on the lands we'll be visiting. A complete schedule of programs for this inaugural year is included in this newsletter. Register soon; we expect these trips to fill quickly. Visit www.nclctrust.org for more information. See you outside!

Beacon of Springtime

You can't judge a plant by its smell, not when that plant is the very symbol of early spring, an icon of the coastal wetlands. The "skunk cabbage's" bright yellow spathe scattered through a canopied wetlands creates an almost picture-perfect forest understory. It is that light-transmitting, sunny, leaf-like sheath shielding the plant's actual flower that lends *Lysichiton americanum* its alternative nickname, "swamp lantern."

A few million years of testing in the coastal landscape has turned the swamp lantern into a plant with many unique and critical features that ensure its survival—including its smell. That foul odor we humans perceive says more about our own olfactory capacity, or lack thereof. That smell acts as a beacon to particular species of insects, guiding them to the plant and helping them find mates at a precise time of year. Insects drawn to this early-blooming plant make good use of the pollen from this large flower and spread the pollen to other plants to complete the reproductive cycle. Moreover, the odor associated with this plant is actually linked only to the leaves; the flower itself amply meets our expectations about how sweet flowers should smell. The best way for a human to get over skunk cabbage's bad rap may be to get down low, put your nose right up next to the flower stalk, and sniff. You will be pleasantly surprised.

Lysichiton americanum and its kin are also unique among plants in their ability to generate their own heat, a phenomenon called thermogenics. Much like the physiology found in animals for generating heat, the swamp lantern builds up a sort of potential energy in its cell mitochondria by concentrating hydrogen ions inside the cell, similar to winding up a watch spring and then releasing the energy. Because this stored energy is not directed into making new chemical bonds, its release produces heat.

Hiking among the giant leaves of swamp lanterns is like hiking in a hidden jungle swamp; it's easy to imagine wild animals hiding among those massive leaves. You may sink into some mud along the way, but the swamp lantern does not grow in very liquid muddy environments, so you can generally count on not sinking in over your head when following the swamp lantern pathway. As you encounter this plant in bloom on your first spring hikes, we hope you will look at it in a new way.



Photo: Neal Maine/PacificLight Images



Photo: Randall Henderson

On Conserved Land cont'd. from p. 1

Many of these lands have been conserved specifically because they include sensitive habitat or cultural sites that could be degraded by regular human access. Restricting access to certain areas helps healthy populations of native plants and animals to thrive. Although our mission does not include conserving land for recreational purposes, we often help state and national parks to acquire land that is then opened to recreation, such as our work to help Lewis & Clark National Historical Park to acquire the 100-acre Yeon Property near Sunset Beach in 2009. Another consideration is that many of the properties NCLC holds in conservation are not safe or appropriate for recreation. NCLC probably owns more impenetrable swamps on Oregon's North Coast than anyone else!

So how can you get out and see some of the land that you are helping to conserve?

Join a guided **On the Land** outing (see article opposite) and visit some of the lands that NCLC has helped to conserve—volunteers and staff will be leading walks and paddle trips throughout the summer to some of our favorite places on Oregon's North Coast.

You can also take part in one of our monthly **Saturday Morning Stewardship** programs, clearing invasive weeds or planting native plants on some of NCLC's most unique properties. Many of our stewardship programs take place on conserved lands not typically open to the public.

Or, visit our website www.nclctrust.org and use our interactive map to take a virtual tour of the properties that your support is helping to conserve, protect and steward. However you do it, we hope to see you outside in 2012!

Parents, be sure to check out the special *On the Land* family programs we have planned!

Earth Day at Circle Creek April 21, 10 am – 1:30 pm



Photo: Celeste Coulter

North Coast Land Conservancy, The Rotary Club of Seaside, The Necanicum Watershed Council, and SOLV are joining together to celebrate Earth Day by hosting a community tree planting event at the 364-acre Circle Creek Habitat Reserve. Since 2004, North Coast Land Conservancy—with the support of *hundreds* of volunteers—has been re-establishing forested habitat throughout the pasture along Circle Creek, an important waterway for spawning coho and chinook salmon and winter steelhead trout. Seven years and 20,000 trees later, we're still going strong.

A large part of the Circle Creek property is a Sitka spruce swamp, a now rare habitat that was once common all along the North Coast. Circle Creek is a place of great biodiversity—elk, beavers, otters, bald eagles, black bears, Canada geese, and many different waterfowl and migrating song birds all make use of the swamp, open pasture, scrub-shrub thickets and emergent wetlands that exist here in this special place.

This year, we'll be spending the day planting a Memorial Forest Grove in the south pasture in honor of members of the community and the Rotary Club of Seaside. Please join us!

Earth Day at Circle Creek Schedule April 21, 2012 10 am – 1:30 pm

10 am The Forest Remembers

NCLC's annual ceremony in The Grove at Circle Creek acknowledging all memorial gifts made to the land trust in honor of friends and loved ones.

10:30 am – 12:30 pm Rotary Memorial Grove Planting

12:30 – 1:30 pm Refreshments at the CC House
(Thanks to The Campbell Group and NCLC volunteers for supplying treats.)

Saturday Morning Stewardship May – September 2012

Volunteer work parties begin at 9 am and end at noon except where noted. Bring gloves, sturdy boots, rain gear, and water, NCLC will supply the tools needed. We will not normally have access to public restrooms. Work continues in the afternoon, so if you want to make a day of it, pack a lunch and stay!

For more information and directions to the work site, please call NCLC Stewardship Director Celeste Coulter at **503-738-9126** or e-mail celestec@nclctrust.org.

MAY 19 Broom Busting on the Clatsop Plains

It's BROOM BUSTER week! The North Coast Land Conservancy will be bustin' out the broom all over the North Coast that week with the finale taking place at Surf Pines north of Gearhart. Come out for a morning of broom bustin' mania.

JUNE 23 Fishers Point & Vosburg Creek Ivy Pull

NCLC and the Lower Nehalem Community Trust are joining forces for an ivy pull! Fishers Point and Vosburg Creek are both on the south end of Nehalem Bay and provide crucial habitat for salmon. Over the years, invasive English ivy has become established in the mature Sitka spruce and red alder forest. This twining woody vine can climb and topple even our sturdiest trees. Please join us in ivy removal efforts to save these coastal giants. **This work party will start at 10 am and end at 3 pm.** Meet at the Wheeler train station at 10 am to carpool to the sites.

JULY 28 Mill Ponds Invasive Plant Removal

Ivy, blackberry, and broom, Oh my! The Seaside Mill Ponds were first excavated for a gravel quarry, then converted to holding ponds for timber, and later abandoned. NCLC helped the City of Seaside to acquire the land which now serves the community as great wildlife habitat for migratory song birds and waterfowl, beavers, and otters, food for birds and people, scenic beauty, and open space for walking and bird watching. Over the years a large portion of disturbed ground here has allowed English ivy, Himalayan blackberry, and Scotch broom to take hold. Please join us in invasive plant removal efforts to improve the habitat for wildlife and people.

AUGUST 18 Twilight Eagle Sanctuary

Want to spend the morning wandering through a tidal marsh picking flowers while bald eagles soar over your head? Notorious for being one of the most beautiful invasive plants along the North Coast, purple loosestrife aggressively outcompetes and replaces native grasses, sedges, and other flowering plants that provide a higher quality food for wildlife. Help us enhance wildlife habitat along the Columbia River.

SEPTEMBER 22 Clean up at Neawanna Point

Celebrate National Estuaries Day with NCLC by enhancing wildlife habitat at Neawanna Point at the mouth of the Necanicum Estuary. Our work will include maintaining native plantings, removing invasive plants, and collecting trash brought in by the tides. We'll also spend some time exploring the estuary and learning about the critical ecological function it provides to salmon and other wildlife that call the estuary their home. Please join us in celebrating the heart of our coastal landscape.