

Coast View

The North Coast Land Conservancy Newsletter

Fall 2013

Clear progress in Warrenton

Tucked between Ridge Road and downtown Warrenton, Clear Lake was the last undeveloped interdunal lake on the Warrenton peninsula outside of Fort Stevens State Park. Now the seven-acre lake and its surrounding dune ridges, emerging wetlands and forested uplands will remain undisturbed in perpetuity, thanks to their acquisition in August by North Coast Land Conservancy.

“The property is at the heart of our Columbia Quiet Waters Initiative,” explains NCLC Associate Director Jon Wickersham. Acquisition of the 45-acre property is a classic example of the kind of complex, win-win transactions at which NCLC staff excel. Working with landowner Rod Gramson of Warrenton, NCLC negotiated the purchase using mitigation bank funds from the Oregon Department of State Lands provided to offset the impact of filled wetlands elsewhere in Warrenton. Most of the \$613,000 from DSL was used to purchase the property; the rest will fund its restoration and on-going stewardship. *Cont. p. 2*



Welcoming the waters back to Circle Creek

By the time you read this, the troublesome Necanicum River berm that hydrologists believe has worsened winter flooding of Highway 101 at the south end of Seaside will be gone. But the project—led by North Coast Land Conservancy and undertaken on NCLC’s Circle Creek Habitat Reserve—will continue into the fall and beyond.

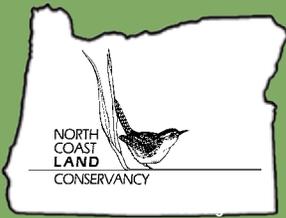
To help prepare the land for winter inundation, large pieces of woody debris have been scattered and anchored across the property to slow the flow of water and enhance habitat for juvenile salmon. Dirt has been mounded in places to create upland habitat for plants that prefer a drier environment. Northwest Oregon Restoration Partnership in Tillamook is growing 25,000 native shrubs and trees that will be planted on the former pasture over the next three years beginning this fall. Much of the land was disked as part of an innovative, multi-stage process to rid the land of invasive reed canary grass without using herbicides.

Last but not least, pairs of pilings have been driven into the ground on the west side of the property (see image at left), where a second berm was removed between Sitka spruce swamp and open pasture, allowing NCLC to someday build a boardwalk trail to access the swamp, should a donor appear to fund the project. Any takers?

“Our work is about so much more than creating wildlife reserves,” says NCLC Executive Director Katie Voelke. “The highway flooding has been more than inconvenient, it’s been dangerous. NCLC’s collaboration with the community to conserve and restore wetlands is what is solving this problem.”



Rows of pilings have replaced the western berm at Circle Creek, where a future boardwalk trail is planned.



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.

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*Canoes at John Day River Marsh
by Charlie Zennaché*

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NCLC Transitions

New board member hails from Tillamook County

Lisa Phipps has long history of public service on the North Coast



Originally from Michigan, Lisa Phipps moved to Tillamook County in 2000 (via Idaho) to become the coastal resource planner and, later, planning manager for Tillamook County. Currently she serves as executive director of the Tillamook Estuaries Partnership, part of the EPA's National Estuary Program. Lisa was mayor of Rockaway Beach for more than five years and currently serves as municipal judge for that city. She has a bachelor's degree in fisheries from Michigan State University and a master's degree in environmental law from Vermont Law School.

Lisa is active in many regional, state, and local boards and committees, including NCLC's Organizational Development Committee, and is excited about deepening her involvement with the land trust. "I look forward to learning more about this area of conservation," she says.

(Re)building Your Land Trust

Funding from Meyer Memorial Trust helps NCLC move on after fire

Anyone who has lived through the destruction of a home or office knows that it can take a lot of time—and a lot of funding—to recover and rebuild. Just days after the NCLC offices were destroyed by fire in December, the land trust staff was back at work in a former medical clinic at the south end of Seaside—an adequate but cramped and less-than-inspirational setting. In June, NCLC moved to larger, more suitable, and much more scenic quarters on the second floor of the King Business Center, overlooking one of NCLC's most iconic properties: 18-acre Neawanna Point.

"We're committed to exploring ways to rebuild out at the Circle Creek Habitat Reserve where our office was," says Executive Director Katie Voelke, "but we know that it will take some years to make that dream a reality." In the meantime, the land trust now has the space it needs for staff offices, volunteer work parties, board meetings, office equipment, and storage. The only drawback is the view over the estuary to the ocean—so good, it can be hard to turn one's attention back to the computer.

This summer the land trust got more good news post-fire: Meyer Memorial Trust awarded NCLC an \$80,000 emergency grant for operational support. Thanks to the foundation and to NCLC's many loyal friends, we are continuing to rebuild our databases and to vigorously pursue conservation opportunities on the northern Oregon coast. *Thank You!*

Clear Lake cont. NCLC staff have already begun excavating fill material and removing ditches that had been used to drain wetlands, and they'll remove part of an existing dune to create a new wetland. Then the wetlands will be replanted with native species, and more alder and spruce will be planted in the uplands.

Sphagnum moss growing on the property indicates that the ecosystem is in good health—as does an active bald eagle nest and some of the biggest female red-legged frogs NCLC staff have seen. The property is close to the land trust's Gardenia Wetland and just north of its Ridge Road Swamp. Such proximity boosts NCLC's efforts to maintain and promote wildlife corridors and other kinds of ecological connectivity at the mouth of the Columbia River.

"For the last 40 years, I have watched wildlife thrive in this area," says Gramson, adding that he was eager for the land to remain in its natural state rather than to develop it. "As a lifelong resident of the immediate area, I believe this is the least I can do for the community."

Volunteer Spotlight: Bonnie Henderson

Writer Has lifelong passion for the North Coast

If you've been reading our newsletters, you've seen the tremendous amount of volunteer work that Bonnie Henderson has done for the land trust. Don't recall any stories about her? That's because she's the writer behind many of the headlines, helping NCLC tell our stories about people, wildlife and land conservation on Oregon's North Coast.

"My brother and I fell in love with the North Coast as kids," Bonnie recalls, referring to NCLC board member Randall Henderson, who with his wife Jeanne (one of NCLC's most dedicated volunteers) introduced her to the land trust. Bonnie lived at the coast in the early 1980s, where she began her journalism career at the *Seaside Signal*. A former *Sunset* magazine editor, Bonnie is now a freelance writer and editor and the author of three books, including *Strand* (2008: OSU Press), which follows the tracks of marine debris, and the hiking guidebook *Day Hiking: Oregon Coast* (2007: The Mountaineers Books).

Bonnie is familiar with the work of land trusts—her husband, Charlie Zennaché, is a board member of the McKenzie River Trust, headquartered near their home in Eugene—and she understands the unique challenge of making the often complex work of land conservation understandable to the public. "I love that I get to use a skill I have to help a cause that I believe in," she says. "Telecommunication lets me live in Eugene and still volunteer for NCLC."

Recently she's been volunteering in person as well, leading NCLC's popular On the Land paddle trips to John Day River Marsh and scouting trails on NCLC's newer acquisitions in the Warrenton area. Encounters with local geologist Tom Horning (also an NCLC board member) inspired her most recent book, which explores how we know what we know about earthquake and tsunami risk in the Pacific Northwest (coming from OSU Press in spring 2014). Don't miss the joint Henderson-Horning *Listening to the Land* presentation scheduled for January!



*The presence of *Hemitomes congestum* is an indicator of a healthy forest system.*

Gnomes in the Forest?

Rare plant sighted near Cannon Beach

Katie Voelke was surprised to stumble upon two patches of blooming "gnome plants"—*Hemitomes congestum*—on a visit to Ecola Creek Forest Reserve in mid-June. Not only is it cool-looking—"pink and shimmering; they looked like they were dropped by a fairy!" as NCLC's executive director described them—but their presence is a good indicator of the forest's vigor.

Mycotrophic plants of this kind don't necessarily flower every year. Unlike green plants that make their own food from sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide, mycotrophic (or fungus-feeding) plants such as the gnome plant feed off mycorrhizal fungi attached to the roots of a host plant. They spend most of their lives unseen under thick layers of leaf litter in the deep shade of a mature forest, poking their heads up certain years to flower and set seed.

Katie spotted the plants on a scouting trip with two representatives of the Native Plant Society of Oregon, who were doing reconnaissance in preparation for the group's annual meeting in 2014, to be held on the North Coast. None of the three had ever seen a gnome plant before—here or anywhere. "You have to have a really undisturbed forest for these kinds of plants to colonize," Katie says. "If you see it, you know you have a really healthy, older forest"—a forest like 1,000-acre Ecola Creek Forest Reserve, which NCLC helped the City of Cannon Beach to conserve beginning in 1999.

Listening to the Land

January–May 2014

Beginning in January, the fifth annual *Listening to the Land* speaker series takes its inspiration from the arts, looking at how the landscape of the northern Oregon coast influences the creative work of local and regional artists. Botany, wildlife, tsunamis, and local, sustainable food are some of the sparks that have fired the imagination of our speakers.

The series kicks off with author Bonnie Henderson (see story on p. 3) and geologist Tom Horning teaming up to examine the links between scenery and plate tectonics and to discuss how Tom—and Seaside—became the central characters in Bonnie's forthcoming book about tsunami risk in the Pacific Northwest. Next we'll delve into the delicious side of nature with surfer and nationally recognized chef John Newman, owner of Newman's 988 and Fishes restaurants in Cannon Beach and a passionate advocate of serving sustainably harvested seafood. From artistry in the kitchen, *Listening to the Land* will move into capturing wildlife on film with documentary filmmaker Howard Shippy, and nature photographer Neal Maine will share some of the breathtaking moments of natural beauty he has preserved with his camera. Look for further program details at www.nclctrust.org.

Listening to the Land is produced in partnership with our friends at the Necanicum Watershed Council, with support from event host Seaside Public Library and with generous funding from the Seaside Chamber of Commerce. Programs take place on the third Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. at the Seaside Library January through May. Join us for this thought-provoking series and consider what creative paths the Oregon coast might inspire in *your* life.

Saturday Stewardship

September–November 2013

Volunteer work parties begin at 9 a.m. and end at noon except where noted. Bring gloves, sturdy boots, rain gear, and water; NCLC will supply the tools needed. Typically we do not have access to public restrooms. For more information and directions to the work site, please call NCLC Stewardship Director Melissa Reich at 503-738-9126 or e-mail melissar@nclctrust.org.

SEPTEMBER 28 Clean up at Neawanna Point

Neawanna Point, located at heart of the Necanicum estuary, is one of NCLC's most beautiful habitat reserves. We'll be working to remove invasive plants and trash from this dynamic and sensitive ecosystem, taking time to walk the 18-acre site and learn more about how critical this land is for a healthy estuary.

OCTOBER 19 Tree Rescue at Salt Grass Meadows

Our friends from the Necanicum Watershed Council will be joining us at this small but important site in the heart of the Neawanna Creek system. Sitka spruce trees and riparian shrubs planted several years ago to help restore this section of the creek to a more functional riparian habitat are in need of rescue from blackberries and other invasive bullies.

NOVEMBER 23 Planting at Stanley Marsh

Stanley Marsh and the adjacent Thompson Creek continue to amaze us with the explosion of growth and wildlife population in response to our past native plant restoration work. We'll continue to add more willow and other native plants to the land, providing food for our favorite restoration partners, the Stanley Marsh beavers. We'll also take a moment to visit Thompson Creek and see if the coho salmon have returned!

Site Stewards help NCLC keep track of protected lands



New NCLC Site Steward Jim Border has taken on both 25-acre John Day River Marsh and 12-acre Wolf Bay along the Columbia River. An avid kayaker, Jim is able to visit these hard-to-access lands in one of the best ways to see them—by water. Thanks Jim! We can't do it without people like you.

NCLC's Site Stewards program is growing each year. Ten volunteers now help NCLC staff do the site monitoring, documentation and care taking required at 22 of our 41 NCLC-owned habitat reserves in order to achieve and maintain national accreditation as a land trust.

NCLC Site Stewards agree to "adopt" one (or more) of NCLC's habitat reserves, and agree to visit the site four times a year, walking the boundaries and the interior of the properties and taking pictures at established photo points, allowing NCLC to document changes over time. They also look for incursions of non-native plants and note changes such as downed trees or new stream channels. Although it's not required, some of our site stewards spend time doing a little invasive plant removal while they are on site.

"The help that the Site Stewards provide is incredibly valuable," says NCLC Stewardship Director Melissa Reich. "Their work makes it possible for NCLC to say 'yes' to taking on new properties, because we know we'll be able to care for them."

Interested in becoming an NCLC Site Steward? Contact Melissa for more information: melissar@nclctrust.org or call (503) 738-9126.