

CORPS' PONDENT

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US Army Corps
of Engineers
Portland District

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PHOTO BY DENNIS SCHWARTZ

Ringin' in Winter

The bell of Portland District's hopper dredge *Yaquina*, in port for annual maintenance, is coated in ice after a winter ice storm hit the Portland metropolitan area in January 2005. *Yaquina*, the youngest dredge in the Corps' fleet, helps maintain the rivers and harbors of the Pacific Northwest along with its sister ship *Essayons*. The hopper dredges work from mid-March to mid-November wherever they are needed along the Pacific coast and Hawaii.



Happy New Year!

Welcome to 2006, as we continue our travels into the 21st century. It will certainly be an important year for the Corps of Engineers as we continue to adapt to a new environment driven by post-Katrina concerns, the Global War on Terrorism and many other factors. Certainly one of the most important factors will be our nation's continuing concern with the environment and our impacts on it. For example, concern for wetlands on the Gulf Coast and biological opinions about salmon recovery programs are two topics directly affecting the Corps that will be key in 2006.

Historically, government and industry put environmental considerations behind progress, but that has changed in important ways and environmental stewardship has become one of our most important missions.

The Corps, and Portland District in particular, is working hard to reverse some of its past actions. You can see that in our ongoing efforts at Bradford Island, where contamination was discovered in the mid-1990s during routine inspections of a landfill that was active until 1982. The Corps began using the site in 1942, at a time when we understood less about the long-term impacts our actions had on the environment. Now we're studying those impacts to find the safest way to restore the habitat to pre-contamination conditions.

The District also is working to get authorization and appropriations to review the situation at the U.S. Moorings and resolve issues we are facing as a result of past decisions.

Some people think the Corps still operates like it did in the 1940s and 1950s, and it's our responsibility to show them we are in the 21st century, both literally and figuratively, and are committed to environmental conservation and restoration. So it's important to understand the viewpoints and concerns of our partners from the environmental community. I recently had the opportunity to meet with Nina Bell, executive director of Northwest Environmental Advocates, an organization that has been very critical of the Corps. I did a little research and was surprised to find that her organization's views are very similar to our environmental operating principles and guidelines. If I hadn't taken the time to find out, I could have gone on believing our two organizations could never see eye to eye on anything. We're not yet in violent agreement on how to affect change, but we're talking, and that's a good thing. Another example is our continuing effort to keep oil out of the river. As we work to ensure there are four barriers between the oil and the river, I have been deeply impressed with our team's dedication to protecting the environment. We need to get that word out.

Knowing who your stakeholders are and what

is important to them is vital to building truly effective relationships. For a long time I believe we saw environmental groups as an obstacle to be overcome, instead of the stakeholders they are. We need to create partnerships with all those who believe in caring for this great land: that includes Native American tribes, environmental activists, ecotourism providers and others. Each group has valuable insights to bring to the table, and we need to incorporate their views whenever possible into our decision-making process.



Col. Thomas O'Donovan

I challenge each of you to take a good look at your projects, missions and responsibilities and make sure you know all you can about your stakeholders – especially those who have concerns about our activities. It's easy to talk with those who agree with you, but I believe that we will find areas of agreement with many organizations we never considered talking to before. It's a tough challenge, but the benefits we'll receive from making the effort will enhance our projects and their contributions to our nation well into the 21st century.

Decisions we made in the past have created challenges for us today, but finding ways to meet those challenges is part of our job as environmental stewards. We can't – and shouldn't – do it alone, so I challenge you to make those connections and build those relationships with stakeholders. It won't always be easy, but I know it will be worth it. ☺

Essays!

CORPS'PONDENT



US Army Corps of Engineers
Portland District

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Biologist hopes efforts to build new turtle neighborhood are successful



By Heidi Helwig, Public Affairs Office

On a cold, rainy day in November, Kat Beal studied a muddy stream bank in the Willamette Valley and smiled at the possibilities.

By summer, the banks of Warren Slough will be an attractive area for basking in the sun. Leave your towel at home, though. With any luck, the only ones basking will be western pond turtles in dire need of the new nesting area.

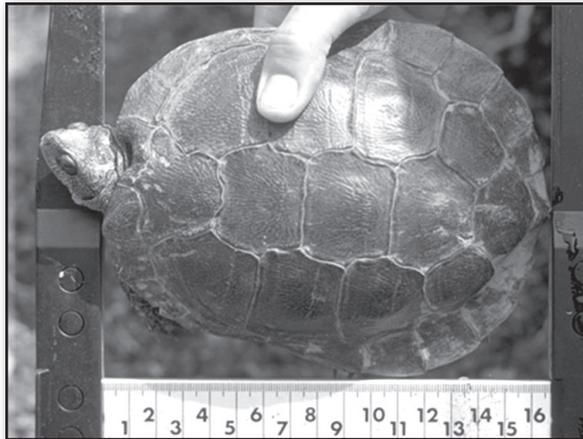
“Pond turtles require warm, sunny, open areas for nesting and are particularly attracted to south-facing slopes where their nests can absorb maximum heating by the sun,” said Beal, a wildlife biologist for the Corps’ Willamette Valley Project. She said the turtles “bake” their eggs in light-bulb shaped nest chambers they create by digging in hard, compacted dirt.

The nutrient-poor dirt along the banks of Warren Slough makes ideal turtle habitat. It is mostly void of vegetation, hard enough that the nesting chambers will not collapse on the eggs and the sun has a clear path to the bank’s southern exposure. Plus, it offers the two types of habitat western pond turtles need: aquatic and terrestrial.

“After about 13 to 14 years of working with turtles, I just have a sense this is the best place,” Beal said. The western pond turtles who call the southern sectors of Fern Ridge Reservoir home, however, have not been attracted to the Warren Slough area. Instead, they travel right past the area known as the South Marsh Project to reach what might appear to be more suitable nesting habitat upstream.

“[Warren Slough’s] steep sides are a barrier to western pond turtles seeking upland sites,” Beal said. But the sites that the turtles deem more suitable are on private, unprotected lands. “Predators dig up most nests every year,” she said.

In October 2005, Beal began reshaping about 300 feet of stream bank within the South Marsh Project, created another 200 feet of nesting berms, and mowed and scraped areas of land to reduce exotic shrubs. The south-facing banks are now gently sloped and free of vegetation. “Our hope is that by creating suitable habitat we can induce turtles to nest on public land where their nests can be protected,” Beal said.



Portland District biologists regularly monitor the western pond turtle and its habitat near Fern Ridge Dam.

Though the same predators that dig up the nests on private property also inhabit the South Marsh area, Beal and her crew have the ability to control their access to the nests. In June and July, Beal will begin searching for nests. When she finds that the turtles are using the banks and berms in the summer, she will erect multi-strand electric fences to keep raccoons and foxes from robbing the nests. She said she also may cover each of the nests with a wire basket to further protect the eggs.

Once the turtles hatch they are on their own. The hatchlings must find their own aquatic and terrestrial habitat, which is another reason the South Marsh area is ideal habitat.

“It’s an advantage to have the nesting sites close to the water,” Beal said. There is no evidence that baby turtles have a natural instinct of how to find water, so they need to just happen upon it, she said. It’s important for turtles to find water because, aside from using a waterway to travel from one place to another, Beal said the water also produces the turtles’ favorite snack—mosquito and other insect larvae.

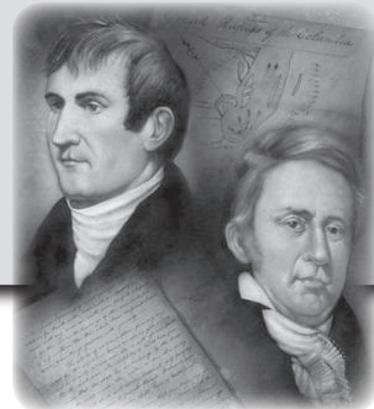
But as in all things, one has to take the good with the bad. The bad, in this case (if you’re a turtle), is if Beal’s efforts are successful, the South Marsh habitat area also will produce a riparian predator’s favorite snack—10-gram turtle hatchlings.

The good news, however, is if the electric fences deter the foxes and raccoons long enough, the western pond turtle will finally call the South Marsh area home. When that happens, Beal will once again find herself studying the muddy stream bank and smiling at even greater possibilities. 



January 1806:

“Not any occurrences today worthy of notice.”



By Melissa Rinehart
Bonneville Lock and Dam

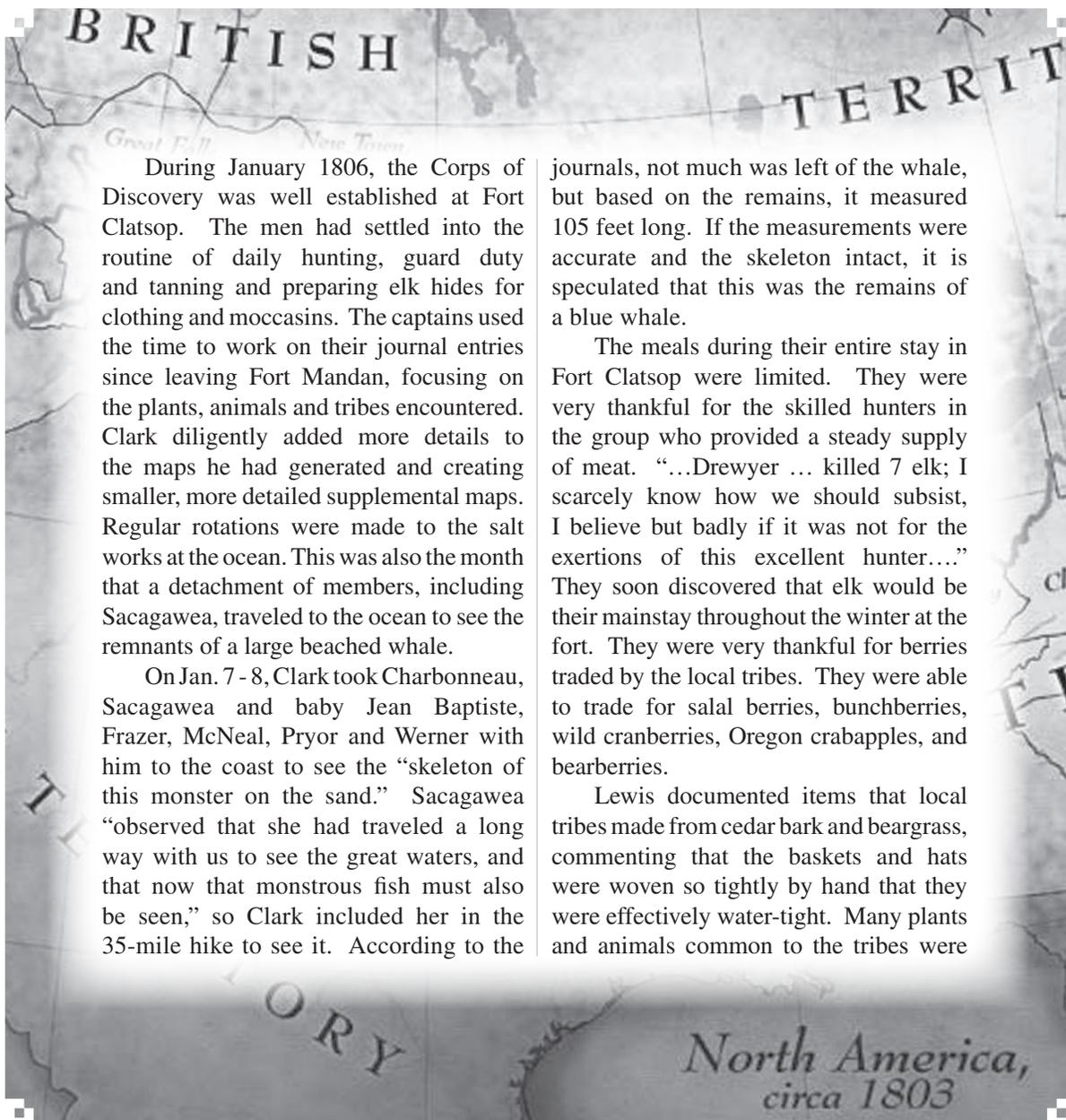
During January 1806, the Corps of Discovery was well established at Fort Clatsop. The men had settled into the routine of daily hunting, guard duty and tanning and preparing elk hides for clothing and moccasins. The captains used the time to work on their journal entries since leaving Fort Mandan, focusing on the plants, animals and tribes encountered. Clark diligently added more details to the maps he had generated and creating smaller, more detailed supplemental maps. Regular rotations were made to the salt works at the ocean. This was also the month that a detachment of members, including Sacagawea, traveled to the ocean to see the remnants of a large beached whale.

On Jan. 7-8, Clark took Charbonneau, Sacagawea and baby Jean Baptiste, Frazer, McNeal, Pryor and Werner with him to the coast to see the “skeleton of this monster on the sand.” Sacagawea “observed that she had traveled a long way with us to see the great waters, and that now that monstrous fish must also be seen,” so Clark included her in the 35-mile hike to see it. According to the

journals, not much was left of the whale, but based on the remains, it measured 105 feet long. If the measurements were accurate and the skeleton intact, it is speculated that this was the remains of a blue whale.

The meals during their entire stay in Fort Clatsop were limited. They were very thankful for the skilled hunters in the group who provided a steady supply of meat. “...Drewyer ... killed 7 elk; I scarcely know how we should subsist, I believe but badly if it was not for the exertions of this excellent hunter...” They soon discovered that elk would be their mainstay throughout the winter at the fort. They were very thankful for berries traded by the local tribes. They were able to trade for salal berries, bunchberries, wild cranberries, Oregon crabapples, and bearberries.

Lewis documented items that local tribes made from cedar bark and beargrass, commenting that the baskets and hats were woven so tightly by hand that they were effectively water-tight. Many plants and animals common to the tribes were



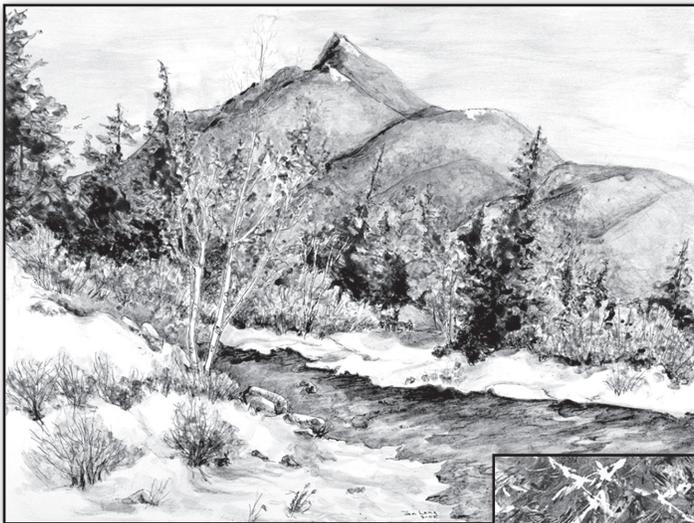


PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTIST JANIS LANG

Soil samples are put through a very fine sieve and mixed with a clear acrylic to create "soil paints." Using these, Lang painted scenes from the Lewis and Clark Trail on watercolor paper.

Lang says, "I've always been fascinated by Lewis and Clark. It's been a lot of fun to research their trip and recreate these images."

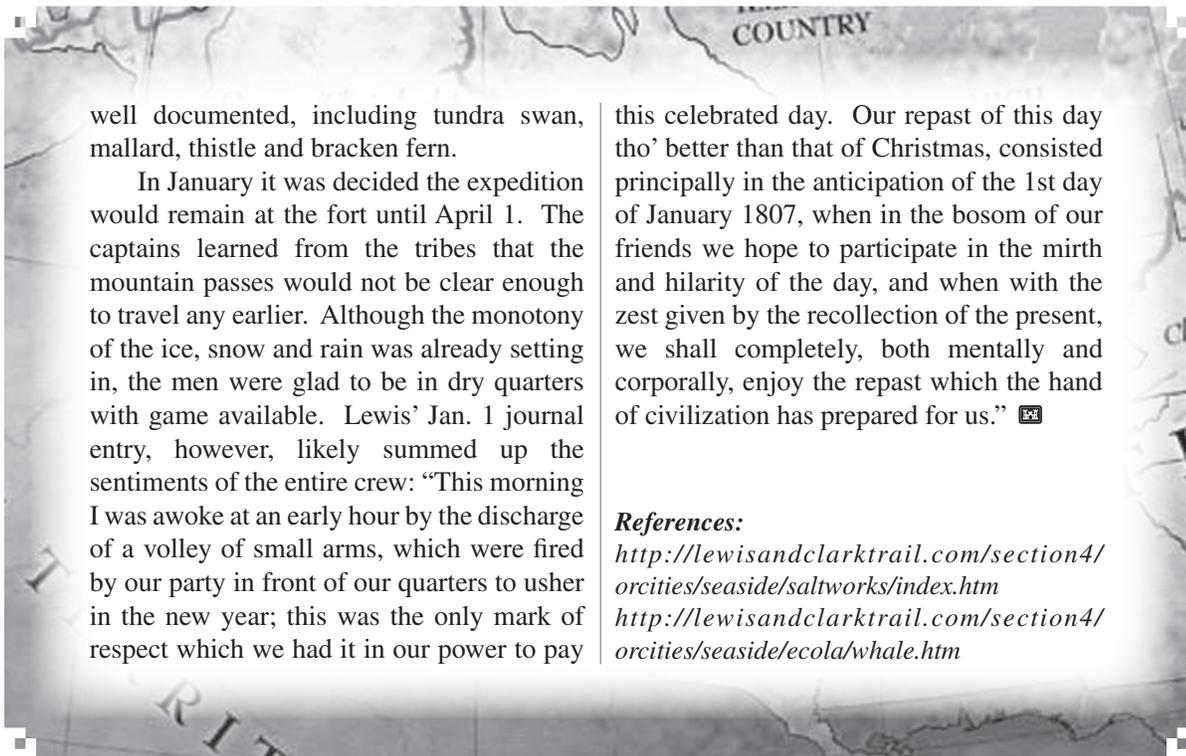
(To see these in color, visit the Corps' pondent website at <https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/pa/cp/home.asp>)

President Jefferson wanted Lewis and Clark to describe "...the soil & face of the country, its growth and vegetable productions, especially those not of the U.S."

Artist Janis Lang was inspired to create these soil paintings from photographs she had seen and from descriptions of soils and landscapes that Natural Resources Conservation Service soil scientists had discovered in the Lewis and Clark journals.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTIST JANIS LANG



well documented, including tundra swan, mallard, thistle and bracken fern.

In January it was decided the expedition would remain at the fort until April 1. The captains learned from the tribes that the mountain passes would not be clear enough to travel any earlier. Although the monotony of the ice, snow and rain was already setting in, the men were glad to be in dry quarters with game available. Lewis' Jan. 1 journal entry, however, likely summed up the sentiments of the entire crew: "This morning I was awoke at an early hour by the discharge of a volley of small arms, which were fired by our party in front of our quarters to usher in the new year; this was the only mark of respect which we had it in our power to pay

this celebrated day. Our repast of this day tho' better than that of Christmas, consisted principally in the anticipation of the 1st day of January 1807, when in the bosom of our friends we hope to participate in the mirth and hilarity of the day, and when with the zest given by the recollection of the present, we shall completely, both mentally and corporally, enjoy the repast which the hand of civilization has prepared for us." 

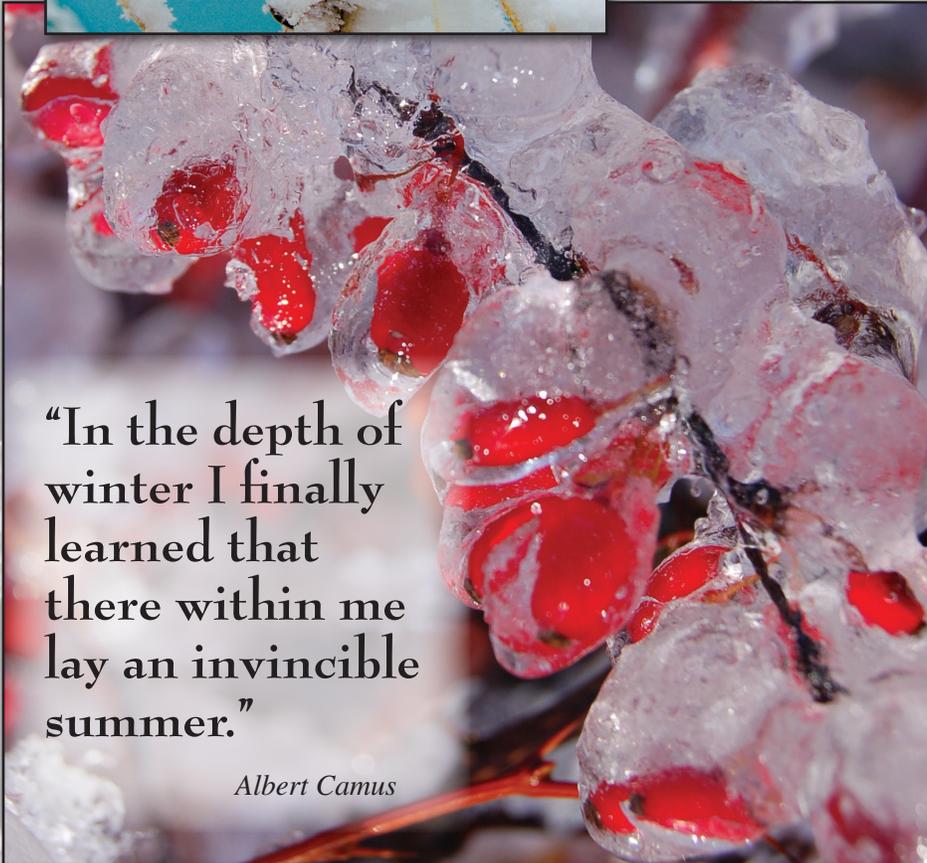
References:

- <http://lewisandclarktrail.com/section4/orcities/seaside/saltworks/index.htm>
- <http://lewisandclarktrail.com/section4/orcities/seaside/ecola/whale.htm>



“If we had
would not
we did not
adversity
be so well

Anne E.



“In the depth of
winter I finally
learned that
there within me
lay an invincible
summer.”

Albert Camus



Portland District employee Dem
ment Division, was in Condon,
amateur photographer, shares th





Had no winter, the spring
 would not be so pleasant: if
 we had not sometimes taste of
 winter, prosperity would not
 be so welcome."

Richard Hooker, 'Meditations Divine and Moral,' 1655



"In seed time learn,
 in harvest teach, in
 winter enjoy."

William Blake



Chris Schwartz, Planning, Programs and Project Management
 Oregon, during a November 2005 ice storm. Schwartz, and
 others, share the beauty of snow and ice with *Corps'pondent* readers.





CRIMS ISLAND RESTORATION PROJECT PROGRESSES



Artist's Rendering of Desired Future Condition
Crims Island Section 536 Environmental Restoration Project

CORPS OF ENGINEERS PHOTO

By Jennifer Sowell, Public Affairs Office

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plays a vital role in the protection and stewardship of environmental resources, as well as the restoration and enhancement of ecosystems such as the Lower Columbia River estuary.

The estuary has been affected over the past 100 years by many factors, including the implementation of navigation improvements, agricultural and forestry practices, and urban and industrial development. The collective effect of these and many other factors contributed to the degradation of the quality and quantity of wetlands habitat in the Lower Columbia River estuary and floodplain.

An example of this can be found on Crims Island. Located 48 miles downriver from Portland in Columbia County, Ore., this once fertile wetland was initially altered by agricultural practices and became choked with invasive reed canary grass, hardly an ideal habitat for the many species of wildlife that make Oregon's wetlands their home.

The Corps, working with a unique partnership of agencies, saw an opportunity to re-establish this land's natural habitat. Through planning, construction and a forthcoming large-scale replanting effort,

the island's tidal channel, marsh and riparian habitats are being restored.

Officially known as the Crims Island Section 536 Environmental Restoration Project, a three-year, \$3.7 million project was made possible thanks to many agencies working together, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bonneville Power Administration, American Rivers and the Columbia Land Trust. The project will restore 94 acres of tidal marsh and channels, along with 115 acres of forest, said Doug Putman, the Corps' project manager for the effort.

"This project lays the groundwork for future restoration projects," said Putman.

Crims Island is the first in a series of habitat restoration projects for the Lower Columbia River planned to restore portions of habitat that have been degraded or lost over time. This will benefit the Columbian white-tailed deer, as well as many species of fish and wildlife (including salmon) listed on the Endangered Species Act, that thrive in the wetland and riparian forest habitats.

"If we want future generations to enjoy abundant wild salmon and steelhead runs in the Columbia River, we must focus on restoring habitat," said



David Moryc, with the outreach office of American Rivers. "This collaborative effort is an excellent model and we hope to see more science-based habitat restoration occurring across the lower Columbia estuary," he said.

The Crims Island restoration project has two major phases, the first of which is to restore tidal channel and marsh habitat. To begin, the Corps excavated 2 feet of soil from the island's interior marsh habitat to attain the elevation necessary for establishing native wetland plant communities.

The lower elevation allows the high tide to inundate the land. The twice daily high tides create conditions needed to develop a native emergent marsh plant community on the island, which offers excellent salmon rearing habitat.

The excavated soil was disposed of on nearby lands that were once used for grazing. This and other upland portions of the island eventually will be restored to riparian forest habitat during phase two of the project.

Actual excavation began in late August 2004, but was postponed due to heavy rain. The earthwork resumed in July 2005 and phase one was completed in October. With the excavation completed, 32 acres of shallow tidal channels were created throughout the 94-acre marshland; once the invasive reed canary grass is eradicated, the native habitat can begin to flourish once again. The restored channels will improve tidal circulation, allowing greater access into and out of the habitat for juvenile salmonids.

During phase two of the project, set to begin in early 2006, the upland area will be converted to native riparian forest habitat by planting 50 acres of cuttings and bare root stock of several native trees and shrubs. Natural seeding of the remaining 65 acres will begin to occur around May 2006, according to Geoff Dorsey, a wildlife biologist with the Corps.

After both phases are completed, the tidal marsh restoration will provide juvenile rearing and foraging habitat for fall chinook, chum and coho salmon. Other salmonids, including the Snake River sockeye, steelhead and coastal cutthroat trout will benefit from restored linkages in the Columbia River's estuarine food web.

The U.S. Geological Survey has implemented a monitoring plan to measure the response of fish, especially juvenile salmon, to the restoration actions. The USGS also will

monitor the riparian forest and marsh vegetation. The results will make an important contribution to understanding the effectiveness of habitat restoration in the estuary.

"We have never tried anything of this size and scope before, so the information we gain at Crims Island will influence the design of future restoration projects on other refuge islands," said Charles Stenvall of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The USFWS, as the landowner of the site, has agreed to assume full responsibility for all future project-related operation and maintenance. Crims Island is a unit of the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge, administered by USFWS.

Humans have impacted wildlife habitats in many ways during the past 100 years, but in 2006 those impacts should be positive ones at Crims Island. Thanks to a partnership of federal, local and non-profit organizations, fish and wildlife should find the island a much nicer place to live. 



PHOTO BY JENNIFER SOWELL

Phase one of the Crims Island, above, creates tidal channels that will encourage native habitat and provide access to juvenile salmonids. Below, the restoration, when complete, will provide habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife species, many of which are threatened or endangered.



PHOTO BY JENNIFER SOWELL



FEATURE



The simple life of a park ranger

By Heidi Helwig, Public Affairs Office

If you think being a park ranger means driving around parks, putting out errant campfires or checking out hiking trails, think again.

Senior Park Ranger Greg Webb at Bonneville Lock and Dam is proof positive rangership is much more. “There is a tremendous variety in what I and other park rangers, or natural resource specialists do,” Webb said. “In a nutshell, our job is to provide quality outdoor recreation opportunities, while also focusing on the stewardship of natural and cultural resources for the benefit of the public, now and into the future.”

While that seems simple enough, this concept can lead the District into discussions with tribal members and cultural resource managers, Webb said. “We may need to determine how to recover a vandalized Native American burial area, or assist with a peregrine falcon survey by providing boats, as well as eyes and ears. We’re called on to evaluate project and contractor environmental activities, walk the riverbanks helping anglers understand the value of cleaning up trash along the river, or take a group of kids on a hike – teaching them about the catastrophic geologic events that may have created that special niche a particular native plant might need.” This string of events, Webb said, all might be in the same week. “It’s a great job. Most of us would not have it any other way.”

A park ranger’s job includes tasks such as public speaking, conflict resolution, operational planning, budget planning, contracting, communicating with stakeholders, as well as emergency and environmental response. “Because we are so visible to the public, we are often the ones folks rely on to handle an issue, no matter what the topic. It makes those times when you are truly ‘outstanding in your field’ (pun intended) great,” he said.



CORPS OF ENGINEERS PHOTO

Bonneville Dam Senior Park Ranger Greg Webb, second from left, leads a group of young hikers to a waterfall located on Corps property. Webb enjoys these outings, which blend adventure, nature and education. He believes his students are more likely to care about the environment once they have experienced it first-hand.

Webb’s first response, when asked about his profession, was that he stumbled onto his park ranger career. “In looking a little deeper, it may not have been much of a stumble,” he said. While attending Oregon State University, he lost interest in the business degree he was pursuing and discovered a major called Forest Resource Recreation Management. “The course of study suited my interests,” he said.

He ditched business and focused his studies on environmental interpretation. “As for finding my niche, after I accepted a ranger position with the Corps, I ran across one of my projects from elementary school ... a list of what I wanted to be when I grew up. Sure enough, one of them was a park ranger.”

It has been a great fit, Webb said. “The Corps’ focus on providing outdoor recreation opportunities and environmental stewardship provides me with ample opportunity to enjoy, protect and manage

“It’s been tremendous to see wildlife and plant species thriving because of our efforts.”

the environment,” he said. “One example was when we, along with Corps engineers, regulatory folks and biologists, were able to collaborate with the environmental community to incorporate some wetlands restoration ... when the juvenile fish monitoring facility was constructed. It’s been tremendous to see wildlife and plant species thriving because of our efforts.”

Webb said his career also allows him to pass on his passion for protecting the environment to others. “The best part of my job is seeing people enjoy an outdoor recreation experience,” he said. Some of his greatest pleasure, he said, includes teaching people how to enjoy the outdoors without harming it.

Rangers at Bonneville Dam have hosted a teachers’ and kids’ day camp as part of a partnership with the Water Resource Education Center in Vancouver, Wash., the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Columbia Gorge Information and Education Office, and a number of other partners. “Seeing them light up when they see their first salmon, feel the spray in their face from a local waterfall, or marvel at a house-sized boulder that has fallen because of the geological processes in the Gorge is priceless.”

Watching people enjoy the environment also has a downside, Webb said. “Hands down, litter and vandalism are the worst parts of the job,” he said. “Sometimes there are tremendous amounts of both. It is a daily battle that we fight. Unfortunately, it’s not the scrap of plastic here or there that is the problem, it’s volumes of trash and illegal dumps that accumulate on the shorelines and natural areas at Bonneville and most parks.”

What if many years ago a young Webb had not added “park ranger” on his list of careers? “I would still find time to help people enjoy the outdoors and strive to find ways that we can all help preserve those



Webb talks about environmental issues with students before heading out for a nature walk.

opportunities,” he said. “I am a believer in balance. I think we need to strive to be good stewards of the earth and its resources. If we all can do a little it can add up to a lot.” In fact, Webb offered the following suggestion: “Next time you are at your favorite place to enjoy the outdoors, take a trash bag with you and help do what many don’t seem to understand. We all need to leave it better than we found it.”

Though outdoor activities obviously fall into Webb’s list of hobbies, “right now I think they all dovetail into one major hobby: spending time with my family.” Much of that family time revolves around the kids’ swim team activities. “It is the force that drives us most of the year,” he said. Both son Connor and daughter Kylie “are eating up the sport, having great success, and keeping mom and dad busy at the same time,” he said.

When the family isn’t swimming or assisting with the swim meets, Webb said they are on the baseball diamond, the softball field or on the gymnastics mats. “Spending quite a bit of time on the ball field myself growing up, I can’t stay off it much now, either,” he said. In their free time, Webb said they stay busy camping, hiking, kayaking, visiting parks and doing a little hunting and fishing. “I don’t think my wife Renee and I would have it any other way.”

**Coming up in the next issue
of the *Corps’pondent*:
Spring Conservation Planning**





2006

Pay and Leave Schedule

Payday
 Holiday
 End of Pay Period

DISTRICT PAY CALENDAR

JANUARY

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31						

2005 Leave Year ends 7 January 2006 (Use or Lose Time must be used or forfeited)

2006 Leave Year ends 6 January 2007 (26 Pay Periods)

This schedule provided courtesy of the Portland District Public Affairs Office (CENWP - PA)