

STEPPIN' OUT

Florence Salmon & Trout Enhancement Program Newsletter

Dredging In Oregon Streams Will Be Shared

Opportunities for gold mining exist in Oregon streams and dredging for gold will be the topic for guest speaker Brian Cole at the Wednesday, May 6 meeting of the Florence Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program. The group meets at 7 p.m. at the Elks' Lodge in Florence. The public is invited to attend.

Cole, who is a pioneer hunter and fisherman, dredges for gold in area streams using a water vacuum in the creek. With a background in geology from the University of Oregon, Cole has been active in a number of issues relating to the outdoor environment in the Siuslaw region, including serving on the Oregon Dunes Restoration Council, the committee overseeing the Western Snowy Plover, among others. He has also served as president of the Florence Rod and Gun Club and is owner of BJ's Ice Cream.

"There is a lot of controversy surrounding dredging," Cole said. "And a lot of misconceptions. There is a bill in the Oregon legislature that will try to regulate and even stop dredging, citing harm to fish populations and other environmental concerns.

"With a background in geology and hydrology," Cole continued, "I can talk about the natural stream flows and how dredging impacts the streams. We can talk about whether there is an impact on fish, as many claim, or if there are benefits to the habitat because of dredging work."

Cole recommends that prior to the meeting, members go to YouTube and watch a video about dredging and lead in the Umpqua River. Once signed into YouTube, search for "Lead Dredged Out Of The Umpqua River, Oregon 2013. Dredgers took seven buckets of lead out of the river in five days, near Tyee. Lead, which is a known contaminant, leaches from the sinkers and weights that are lost each year in rivers during fishing season.

Prior to the talk, the club will review the 2015 Steelhead season and look forward to a busy May (see calendar of events below). The main focus now shifts to the annual fundraising raffle, with the drawing held Memorial Day Monday.

Calendar of Events – May, 2015

Wednesday, May 6

General Member Meeting

"Dredging in Oregon Streams"

Brian Cole, speaker

Business meeting precedes talk

Public is invited to attend

7 p.m. Elks' Lodge, 12th st. in
Florence

Thursday, May 7

Steelhead Fry Classroom

Cleanout and Release

7:30 a.m. at Siuslaw Elementary

10 a.m. at Munsel Creek

Saturday, May 9

Eugene Girl Scouts' Fishing Day

Cleawox Lake Volunteers needed to
help kids fish.

Breakfast and lunch provided

7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Mike Frankhouser and Dean
Hendricks, team leaders

Wednesday, May 13

Makeup Bottom Fishing Trip

Betty K Charter Trip

Limited to 21 anglers.

Discount for those on first trip

Contact Ron Caputo, 541-997-4961

Tuesday, May 14

Whittaker Creek Trap Removal

9 a.m. Meet at the STEP Shed

Bill Hennig, team leader

Saturday, May 16

Rhody Show Car Raffle Sales

8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sign up with Craig Brandt

Tuesday, May 19

Coho Fin Clipping

9 a.m. until we're done

Lunch will be served.

STEP Hatchery

Behind the Water Treatment Plant

Wednesday, May 20

Board Meeting

4 p.m. Port of Siuslaw offices

Thursday, May 21

Coho Fry to Ackerly Creek

8 a.m.

**Watch your email for updates,
changes and additions.**

**Work parties will be as needed
and will be announced in emails**

The President's Message

By Ron Caputo

I'm pretty sure we will have a wild Coho season in the Siuslaw this year. ODFW is still waiting for NOAA to approve the fishery. What has NOAA (U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) have to do with our fish? They are the agency the federal government put in charge of enforcement of The Endangered Species Act (ESA) for Marine and anadromous fish species. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) does the same for most of the other species.

What is the Endangered Species Act? The law requires federal agencies, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or the NOAA Fisheries Service, to ensure that actions they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat of such species.

On May 6, 1997, NMFS, on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce, listed as threatened the Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast Coho salmon. The Coho salmon population in the Southern Oregon/Northern California region had declined from an estimated 150,000-400,000 naturally spawning fish in the 1940s to fewer than 10,000 naturally producing adults in the 1990s. These reductions are due to natural and man-made changes, including short-term atmospheric trends, such as El Nino which causes extremes in annual rainfall on the northern California coast; predation by the California Sea Lion and Pacific Harbor Seal; and commercial timber harvesting.

Since the listing in 1997 the Coho stocks have rebounded, thanks to changes in ocean conditions, low timber harvest, improved logging practices, and miles of stream restoration by Florence STEP and other organizations like the Siuslaw Watershed Council.

More than 680,000 Coho returned to Oregon in 2009, double that of 2007. The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife required volunteers to herd fish into hatchery pens. There were reports of creeks with so many fish that "you could literally walk across on the backs of Coho," said Grant McCombie, outdoors correspondent for a Portland television station. Lower temperatures in 2008 North Pacific waters brought in fatter plankton which, along with greater outflows of Columbia water, feeding the resurgent populations. The 2009 run was so large that food banks were able to freeze 40 tons for later use.

Does The Endangered Species Act work? Some of its successes are the Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Whooping Crane, Sea Otter, Gray Wolf, Grizzly Bear and Gray Whales. What about Oregon? Listed mammals include Columbia White Tail Deer, Canadian lynx, Southern Sea otter, and my favorite the Stellar Sea Lion. Fish that are listed besides Coho are Chum Salmon, Oregon Chub and the Bull Trout.

I'm sure we will have a wild Coho fishery in the Siuslaw. How can they call 30,000 Coho returning to the Siuslaw River endangered? It's we fishermen who are becoming more endangered every year. See you on the River.

See you on the river!

Rough Seas Lead to Rough Ride

A hale and hearty group of STEP anglers were up early on April 30, eager to land limits of rock fish and ling cod at the annual Betty K Charter Fishing Trip. Already cancelled once this year due to rough seas, the charter operators were hopeful that the group could get out and hook limits before forecast winds picked up in the afternoon.

Alas, it was not to be. Leaving the dock at 7:30 a.m., the fish were not cooperative and a strong drift made it nearly impossible to get lines down to the bottom. Though the boat travelled south to Bandon searching for a hot spot, few anglers boated any fish. Finally, at 10:30 a.m., the captain decided with the winds picking it to call it a day and the group headed back to port, with less than 10 fish on board.

The Betty K Charters is offering a \$20 discount for a rescheduled trip, which president Ron Caputo has put on the calendar for Wednesday, May 13. "We have 13 discounted seats," he said. "There is space for 21 anglers." The regular cost for the trip is \$70 but the discounts will go first to the members who were on board for the shortened trip, and then available to the next in line.

If you are interested in the trip, call or email Ron as soon as possible. His phone is 541-997-4961 or email at roncaputo@charter.net.

School Aquarium Project Winding Down

For nearly five weeks, students in 24 classrooms have been observing and delighting in the development of some 100 or so steelhead eggs in each aquarium. Now, they are getting ready to say goodbye to the buttoned-up fry as STEP volunteers empty the aquariums on Thursday morning, May 7 and help first graders release the fry into Munsel Lake.

"It has been, overall, another good year for the program," remarked Becky Goehring, who coordinates the Fish Egg to Fry program for STEP. "The great bonus this year was being able to provide chillers to every classroom, eliminating the need to use frozen ice bottles. A big thank you to Ron Caputo for writing a grant to Western Lane Community Foundation and to the Foundation for funding it."

Members of STEP will meet at 7:30 a.m. on Thursday morning at the school to remove the fry, empty the aquariums and chillers and transport it all back to the STEP Shed. Equipment coordinator Terry Talbot has been preparing ways to clean and sanitize the chillers, pumps and filters and cleaning out aquariums before storing away all the equipment for the year.

"I can't thank the equipment team enough," Goehring said. "Terry, Bob Occhi, Bob Depweg and Brian Hudson stepped up at the beginning of the program this year to take that worry off my plate. It really has made a difference."

Mike Frankhouser and the two high school senior interns made several trips to the classrooms to check on the aquariums and make sure that everything was running correctly, fixing issues that came up.

Goehring noted that there are some tweaks to the program, now that there are chillers for all classrooms and will meet with the team to look at what can be changed to improve the experience.

"The best part remains," she said. "Meeting the first graders at Munsel Lake and letting them take a cup with fry to the water's edge and release the fish is precious. When I visit the classrooms and asked who has done that, hands shoot up in every age group. This program really does have an impact on the kids."

Annual Fundraiser Faces Challenges This Year. STEP UP!

A change in venue for the Memorial Day weekend Y Marina Boat Show will create sales challenges for the annual STEP Fundraiser. The boat show will be held this year at Johnson Motor Company, on Hwy. 101 in Florence, instead of at the Three Rivers' Casino Events Hall.

"This is going to create a challenge for us in selling tickets and reaching the totals we have in past years," commented Bill Hennig, coordinator of the annual fundraiser. "Last year, we sold nearly \$2,000 worth of tickets during the four days we had the display table set up at the casino. There is a lot of foot traffic that comes through because folks are at the casino. They wandered in and bought tickets when they saw the great prizes and heard of the work we do."

The STEP display will be set up in the showroom at Johnson Motor Company and advertising will go out, highlighting both the boat show and the raffle. Still, members will need to STEP UP and sell more tickets individually in order to compensate for the change in foot traffic, Hennig said.

There are a variety of prizes for the raffle, including guided fishing trips, rods and reels, gift certificates from businesses, restaurants, wine, cookbooks and how-to books, clothing and more. Another way members can help the fundraiser is to donate a prize.

Tickets are \$2 each or 3 for \$5. They are available for sale at Bridgeport Market in Florence, or Randy's Riverview Market in Mapleton. Members are also selling tickets individually. Currently, there are 128 members on the 2015 roster.

"If each member sold \$25 worth of tickets, that would bring in \$3200.00, which would help offset the potential drop in walk-in sales," Hennig said. He will have tickets available for members to take at the May 6 meeting.

There have been additional expenses this year for the club, including some cost overruns for the new fish cleaning station recently completed at the Port of Siuslaw, trap expenditures, hatchery upgrades, mileage reimbursements and other costs.

"The wildness and adventure that are in fishing still recommend it to me." -- Henry David Thoreau

CALENDAR:**MAY**

LOTS GOING ON! IF YOU CAN'T VOLUNTEER, SHOW YOUR SUPPORT BY SELLING RAFFLE TICKETS OR DONATING PRIZES FOR THE RAFFLE DRAWING!

JUNE

2-5 Outdoor Adventure Camp for Fifth Graders at the Girl Scout Camp site, Florence, OR

6 Free Fishing Day at Cleawox Lake. Activities and BBQ

25 Siuslaw Watershed Camp at Girl Scout Camp Site, Florence, includes kids fishing on Cleawox in STEP volunteer boats

AUGUST

5 Annual Membership BBQ

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