CREST Quarterly Newsletter

Greetings CREST Members and Partners:

Happy New Year to all of you! We have been blessed with many awe-inspiring days on the Columbia River Estuary this winter. Hopefully you have enjoyed the unusual cold, dry spells! Huge flocks of over-wintering birds seeming to revel in the mild sun on Youngs Bay, and hummingbirds have been busily frequenting the feeder on my office window.

Please take a moment to read about our latest efforts. CREST is gearing up to implement as many as six restoration projects this coming summer, and is actively planning several more for the coming years. As if that weren’t enough, our biologists have been testing innovative new equipment, our administrative staff organized an expansion of the CREST offices and have been making significant improvements to our business systems, and our planner is engaged on several projects with local governments. Also attached is a recent article featuring CREST in The Daily Astorian.

Throughout the spring I will be working on development of a new website and an update to our strategic plan – necessary and exciting steps in telling the story of our efforts here at CREST. As always, please stay in touch and let us know how we can be of service.

All the best,

Micah Russell, Director

Habitat Restoration Project Updates

CREST Habitat Restoration Project Managers are obtaining engineering designs, applying for permits, and making preparations to construct several tidal wetland restoration projects in summer and fall, 2012. These include:
• **Gnat Creek** (near Knappa, Oregon): removal and breaching of unneeded and remnant dikes from Oregon Department of Forestry and private lands. Also, removal of an earthen dam and artificial pond (below) to reconnect a small tributary to a tidal wetland. Results in improved fish access to 90 acres of wetland for juvenile rearing and 1.5 miles of stream for adult spawning.

![Gnat Creek](image)

• **South Tongue Point** (near Astoria, Oregon): replacement of a tidegate with a large culvert. Results in new fish access to 12 acres of wetland for juvenile rearing on land belonging to the Oregon Department of State Lands.

• **Colewart Creek / Netul Landing** (near Astoria, Oregon): excavation of new tidal channels in an area artificially elevated with dredge materials (Colewart Creek), as well as removal of a tidegate (Netul Landing). Results in new fish access to 3,200 linear feet of new channel on 45 acres of land belonging to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Park.

• **Diblee Point** (near Rainer, Oregon): excavation of a new tidal channel though dredge material that will connect isolated ponds (below) to a valuable embayment of the Columbia River estuary. Results in new fish access to 20 acres of wetland for juvenile rearing on land belonging to the Oregon Department of State Lands.

![South Tongue Point](image)

• CREST is also assisting the Wahkiakum Conservation District in completing the **Skamokawa Creek Historic Channel** project. The final phase of this project involves installation of a new tidegate, improving fish access and water quality for a significant meander of the stream.
Coastal Planner / GIS Technician, Alejandro Bancke has created a map to illustrate some of the complexities of the Columbia River Drainage Basin (see below). The Columbia River watershed encompasses two countries, 134 counties, seven states, and hundreds of communities. There are many overlapping layers of governance and various state and federal agencies that have direct and indirect roles in how the river is managed. Clear communication to stakeholders with ample opportunity for public involvement can be a challenge with so many varied management interests working to fulfill their goals and obligations. Alejandro is planning to present this map and information on his work as a planner with CREST at upcoming conferences and meetings. Contact him at abancke@columbiaestuary.org with questions or to request a digital or hard copy.
Personnel Updates

Finally, we are pleased to announce that Tom Josephson joined our team as a *Habitat Restoration Project Manager* this past November. Tom was most recently employed by the Oregon chapter of *The Nature Conservancy*, working on a variety of projects including a *Conservation Action Plan* for the Nehalem River watershed. Tom will be working from an office in Portland so as to be in close proximity to projects being planned just downstream of the metropolitan area. He will also help CREST be more readily available for frequent Portland-based meetings. We all appreciate that he has jumped right in to project planning and permitting with enthusiasm and great ideas!

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**National Park looks to complete Colewort Creek restoration** BY TYLER GRAF
The Daily Astorian: Wednesday, January 11, 2012

Madeline Dalton, the habitat restoration project manager with Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce, and Chris Clatterbuck (both pictured below), chief of resource management with the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, describe Phase 2 of the Colewort Creek restoration effort on the South Clatsop Slough. Work is expected to begin on the project in the summer and would further restore tidal channels and bring back native species.

For the National Park Services' restoration of the Colewort Creek watershed at the South Clatsop Slough near Warrenton, there's a tale of two sides of the same property. One side is pastureland, covered by matted juncus grass and elk droppings, while the other is a marshy expanse of native sedges and salmon tributaries.

Over the summer, the Park Service plans to finally wrap up a project that will revitalize all 44-acres of the tidal wetlands, 15 years after the project was first identified and five years after its first phase was completed.

First, however, the project's partners - including Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, on whose property the land sits, and the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce - have to shore up funding for the work and have the permitting approved by regulators.
CREST will submit the project's permit applications to the Oregon Department of State Lands and the Army Corps of Engineers next week.

Work on the second and more challenging phase of the project promises to restore the remaining acres of degraded estuary habitat by aligning them with the north side of the property, which the first phase already restored. Currently, the remaining acres sit about three feet higher than the north side, the result of dredge spoils being deposited onto the land.

"It's a big difference," said Chris Clatterbuck, chief of resource management for the historical park, referencing the three-foot differential.

The end result of the project will be the addition of 3,500 feet of additional tidal channels, essentially lowering the south side of the property.

Because of the current difference in elevation, the land remains bone dry even during high tides. Work planned for the property will carve channels into it, extending out from the Lewis and Clark River, which will allow Colewort Creek to wash through it.

Native plant species of the variety that the Corps of Discovery encountered more than 200 years ago will also be planted, and woody debris will be placed in water ways to become salmon habitat.

The first phase of the project was completed in 2007 and replaced 60 feet of tide gate on the property's north side with a 40-foot bridge. This work uncorked the river and allowed it to wash over the land more naturally, supplying juvenile salmon with habitat and native plant species with an area to grow, Clatterbuck said.

So far, it's worked, project partners say.

"It's allowed tidal influences to come back to the property," Clatterbuck said.

After the first phase was completed in 2007, the number of salmon species found in the river jumped from two to five, including Chum, which was thought to no longer exist in the Lewis and Clark River System. The numbers of Coho and Chinook have also significantly increased, according to the Park Service.

"That number of salmon exploded after the bridge was put in," said Carla Cole, natural resources project manager for Lewis and Clark National Park. "The north side has done well, but there's room for improvement."
Madeline Dalton, habitat restoration project manager for CREST, said the number of returning salmon was a sign that the next phase would also be a success.

Project partners were particularly pleased by the returning number of Chum, Dalton said.

"The only known stocks of Chum are up in Washington," she said, "so finding juveniles means some of the adult spawners have to be coming back here."

Though project partners have high hopes for the project, there are questions about how they will pay for it. The expected cost of the project is between $400,000 and $550,000.

The Park Service has identified some funding options, including grants from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the Bonneville Power Administration.

Those grants are crucial, as the BPA salmon recovery grant will represent the majority of the project's funding, Dalton said.

Once funding is in place, the project's partners will hire a contractor. Portland-based Vigil-Agrimis Engineering has already begun working on the project's conceptual designs.

For Clatterbuck, in his role with a national park that emphasizes nature and history, he said he believes the project will also benefit people as much as it will salmon and the environment.

When people use the walking path near the area in the future, Clatterbuck said, they'll see something that looks extremely similar to how it appeared when Lewis and Clark decided to settle down.

"Returning the area to wetland conditions informs visitors as to why the Corp of Discovery chose this for Fort Clatsop in the first place," Clatterbuck said.