

Collins View SWNI News August 2015

Water, water everywhere ... but only in the media.

It's no secret that most of Oregon is experiencing moderate to severe drought. Currently, twenty (20) counties in Oregon are under emergency drought declarations, and approximately 98% (ninety-eight percent) of the state is experiencing drought. Did you know that most of the Bull Run Watershed supply comes from rain rather than from snowpack? Did you also know that Bull Run is Portland's primary source for drinking water?

Although Portland officially entered "moderate drought" status just recently, city officials don't foresee mandatory conservation measures or restrictions on household water use for Portland. This is (somewhat) good news. However, the reservoirs have been in a "draw-down" mode since May. This means we are taking out more water than is coming in from the Bull Run River.

Unfortunately, the drought is turning our iconic forests into tinder land. And, our withered ski season is another casualty due to missing snow packs. As you've seen in the local news, areas of the Willamette River are a tepid soup of toxic algae and heat-stressed/dead salmon. This is worrisome, as the Willamette is home to a number of aquatic species including salmonids. The Willamette is designated a critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act. Seasonally, it violates federal Clean Water Act temperature standards—hence the dead salmon.

We can do something about this. It's as close as our own neighborhood and back yard. Collins View is home to the River View Natural Area's wetlands and seven cold water streams. Culverts under SW Macadam Avenue carry the streams into the Willamette River, lowering the river's water temperatures enough to provide critical temperature refugia¹ to migrating adult and rearing juvenile salmonids. Water quality is the first priority listed in the "DRAFT Design Criteria for River View Natural Area Management" (April 1, 2015). In particular, the idea is to "Protect and enhance watershed health of the site to maintain and protect cold stream flows into the Willamette River to meet State water quality standards and support cold water refugia for Coho, Chinook, Steelhead, macroinvertebrates, and other aquatic species...."

Needless to say, this priority is a challenge. Areas of significant erosion within the RVNA streams are common, caused by runoff from the neighborhood and networks of trails that cross the streams with no erosion control. So, what can we as neighbors do to protect and enhance the water quality of our watershed? Below are a few suggestions:

- 1) Do not dump undechlorinated pool water onto the streets or into storm drains and stormwater catch basins. Chlorinated pool water is toxic!
- 2) Do not use trails that cross or impinge on the streams in RVNA.
- 3) Use common sense and be frugal in household water use.

In order to be good neighbors, we do not need permission, supervision, or invitations to special organizations. We can simply be respectful stewards of our neighborhood and our environment.

¹ noun, plural **refugia**

[ri-**fyoo**-jee-uh] (Show IPA)

1.

an area where special environmental circumstances have enabled a species or a community of species to survive after extinction in surrounding areas.

On another note and speaking of good neighbors, there are reports on our Nextdoor neighborhood network of home robberies and invasions in broad daylight, some with the owners at home. We are also reading about casual wanderers or blatant intrusions into private yards. Be vigilant; keep garage doors closed and your doors locked when they are out of eyesight even when you are home or in your yard. If an entrance area is not within eyesight, close it up and lock it down until you are able to monitor the area or location first hand.

Finally, regarding the July 2015 Auditors Report on Southwest Portland, "Residents rate livability highly while some services are much worse than citywide." The report states that "Southwest residents feel better about public safety than other residents of the City.... Residents in Southwest, and Portland generally, have given significantly lower ratings for overall City government compared to ten years ago... while many Southwest residents remain committed to neighborhood improvements only 20 percent of Southwest respondents (2014 annual survey) felt good or very good about their opportunities to influence government decisions. This is the lowest rating in the six years we have asked this question.... The City has much work to do to improve the transportation situation in Southwest and throughout the City." Visit: <http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?c=66565&a=536324>