

Tillamook County Commissioners
Charles Hurliman, Tim Josi, Mark Labhart
503-842-3403
FAX 842-1384
TTY Oregon Relay Service

COMMISSIONERS' WEEKLY REPORT

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NEW FISH PASSAGE ON COUNTY ROAD

Longview Fibre Co. (LFCo) recently completed a mitigation project on God's Valley County Road. Under Oregon law, any artificial obstruction of fish passage must normally be eliminated when replacing or repairing an artificial obstruction. In LFCo's case, LFCo had four culverts that needed replacement on four streams that were tributary to Grassy Lake Creek that blocked fish passage to some degree. In all four cases, the amount of fish habitat above the culverts was minimal for cutthroat trout. Not only was the habitat minimal, but these four streams had gradients steeper than what is allowed for culverts, so that expensive open bottom arches or bridges would be necessary for fish passage.

Oregon Law (ORS 509.585) allows the fish passage requirement to be waived if mitigation is done with a net benefit to the resource. In the case here, LFCo was granted waiver on the four tributaries of Grassy Lake Creek for replacing a culvert on God's Valley County Road. The culvert on God's Valley County Road is on Roberson Creek, a tributary to God's Valley Creek. The culvert on Roberson Creek restricted fish passage to habitat over a mile in length to several species of fish including coho salmon. The culvert bottom was rusted out and at 48 inches in size, was extremely undersized for maximum winter flows. Roberson Creek would regularly overflow God's Valley County Road each winter dumping sediment from the road surface into Roberson Creek and God's Valley Creek.

Longview Fibre Co. replaced the Roberson Creek culvert with an open bottom cement box culvert that measured 6' tall by 13.5' wide. The cost of the cement box culvert was over \$26,000 for the structure alone. This cost plus the cost of installation all are the responsibility of LFCo. The only cost to Tillamook County is the obligation to maintain the structure. The maintenance of the new structure should be nearly nonexistent compared to the maintenance required with the old 48" culvert. This mitigation project is documented with a Memorandum of Agreement between LFCo, Tillamook County through its Public Works Department, and the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife.

This area of God's Valley Creek has received extensive habitat improvement work over the past three summers through a partnership with the Lower Nehalem Watershed Council and LFCo. The mitigation benefited all involved: Longview Fibre Co., Tillamook County and its tax payers, and of course the resource (coho salmon and other fish species).