

## EDITOR'S COMMENT

# Project shows how collaboration can move flood waters

Last week, the Tillamook area got some good news about flood control and the results of cooperation.

The county and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have approved permits for the Wilson/Trask Spillway, the local Oregon Solutions team top-priority project.

Work is under way this week by contractor Nehalem Marine to facilitate faster movement of floodwaters in North Tillamook back to Tillamook Bay following flooding events. The approximately \$310,000 project is expected to be completed by summer's end.

Amazing. It was just a year ago — May 23, 2007 — when state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, and County Commissioner Mark Labhart co-convened the first meeting of Oregon Solutions project team members to lay the groundwork for selecting projects to help alleviate flooding in Tillamook.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski wrote in a letter at the time that “flooding issues in Tillamook County require a collaborative effort to focus energy and to leverage resources. Oregon Solutions can help to further federal, state and local government partnerships with the civic sector to accomplish projects on the ground.

Projects on the ground — those were key to ensuring that this wouldn't result in

yet another flood study that would be stacked on the shelf with the others. Justifiably, there were skeptics who weren't entirely convinced that anything tangible would come of this Oregon Solutions effort.

One factor contributing to its success so far seems to have been commitments, starting with the Governor's Office, to see that this approach worked — that local, state and federal agencies cooperated in helping to streamline a permitting process that can be interminable.

It helped that Johnson steered \$1 million in state money to the Tillamook Oregon Solutions effort.

It helped that local Oregon Solutions team members representing diverse economic and environmental interests actually worked out many of their differences, at least to the point where a list of priority flood-control projects could be agreed upon.

It also helped that county, state and federal staffs “worked heroically to get us this permit,” Johnson said last week. “I can't say enough about the cooperation.”

So far, it looks like the Oregon Solutions system is working according to plan. Just as gratifying — as Johnson put it, “This is testifying to the success of a collaborative process.”

— Ken O'Toole