

Vernonia Celebrates Approval Of Funding For New Schools

BY RYAN KNUTSON, Oregon Public Broadcasting

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School boosters in Columbia County celebrated Wednesday, after voters approved a bond measure in Tuesday's election to help build new schools in Vernonia. Ryan Knutson reports.

Just up the hill from downtown Vernonia, there's an empty soccer field surrounded by Douglas fir trees.

But a \$13 million bond measure approved by voters here means that by 2011, it could be the home of Vernonia's elementary, middle and high schools.

At their current location, the three schools were badly damaged in the floods of 1996 and 2007.

This new site is above the flood-prone area.

Elected officials, including state senator Betsy Johnson, gathered with the community to look toward the future.

Betsy Johnson: "So how do you feel about getting new schools? Well the votes spoke very clearly last night, this is the beginning of a rebirth of a great place in Oregon."

The \$13 million bond measure will raise only about a third of what's needed for the \$37 million project.

Community leaders are seeking the rest of the funding from grants, federal stimulus money and state sources.

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