



Vernonia Schools – Oregon Solutions Steering Committee
Scout Cabin, Vernonia
March 8, 2011, 2-3:30pm
Minutes

Attendees: Glenn Ahrens, OSU Extension; Sharon Bernal, VEDC; Dan Brown, CAT; Willow Burch, Vernonia City Council; Dr. Ken Cox, VSD; John Donovan, Metropolitan Group; Steve Effros, Aadland Evans Project Manager; Mark Ellsworth Regional Coordinator, Regional Solutions; Bill Haack, City of Vernonia Interim Administrator; Stephanie Hallock, Oregon Solutions; Jason Hitzert, Representative Wu's office; Alissa Keny-Guyer, Oregon Solutions; Greg Kintz, VSD School Board, Oregon School Boards Association; Jim Krahn, VSD School Board Chair; Bill Landmaid, VSD School Board; Heather Lewis, Vernonia Health Center Board; Kelly Marks, PCC; Aaron Miller, VSD; Betsy Miller, VSD; Josette Mitchell, City of Vernonia Mayor; Marilyn Nicks, Vernonia City Council; Dawn Plews, VSD; Dick Townsend, Oregon Solutions

VHS Students: Crystal Ann Carreon, Christina Halvorson, Ryan Lawrence, Brittany Meglan, Liz Poulin, teacher Teri Willard

Welcome/Introductions

Alissa Keny-Guyer

Alissa welcomed everyone on behalf of co-convener Tony Hyde, who was in Washington DC.

Vernonia Rural Sustainability Center

Aaron Miller

Aaron provided an update on VRSC natural resource programs, teacher professional development, and efforts to develop and integrate curriculum district-wide through collaborations with Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI), Upper Nehalem Watershed Council, PCC, OSU Extension, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Highlights include:

- Fourth graders participating in Moving Science Education Forward projects: raising salamanders and trout, and releasing trout were into Vernonia Lake;
- Stream and Salmon restoration with the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council;

- Steelhead/Trout enhancement program of Oregon Fish and Wildlife expanding to two releases next year – Trout and Coho salmon raised in classrooms will be added to the river system; VSD has applied for a \$2k grant to purchase more equipment for fish rearing projects;
- Second annual Vernonia native tree planting day on Earth Day 4/22/11: a partnership with UNWC, city of Vernonia, local historians, Fish and Wildlife;
- Vernonia Rural Education Corps (VHS) students fieldwork expanding; one fall semester student has made this his senior project;
- Mr. Shockley, VHS math teacher, started an engineering class.

UNWC is a major VRSC partner; its Elk Creek project received a \$500k grant. It has two proposals to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board for federal grants. One proposal is for resource management on the Weyerhaeuser land on Pebble Creek; the second is an RBA rapid bio assessment project to shock the water and do fish population counts to determine barriers. Both projects could have student involvement.

The new school site will have wetland mitigation opportunities, a native plant nursery and identification gardens. Currently UNWC gets all native plants from a BLM nursery in Molalla. BLM is working to distribute materials to local watersheds. VSD and UNWC submitted a \$33k grant proposal to BLM for a green house, shade house and shade beds. The nursery will grow all native material for watershed projects and will grow landscaping plants for the school site. Elizabeth Brewster's winter 2012 Landscape Technology class at PCC will focus on the Vernonia campus as their class project. Students will design part of the landscape and work with VSD students for site landscaping.

The Vernonia School District is also involved in working on the Nehalem River Conservation Action Plan, facilitated by The Nature Conservancy. Development of the Nehalem CAP will set the stage for future coordinated stream and salmon restoration projects throughout the Nehalem River watershed. Stakeholders from watershed councils, timber companies, private landowners, dairy farmers, conservation groups, ODFW, USFW, the Vernonia School District, BLM and many others are at the table to create a coordinated effort to enhance the viability of the Nehalem River system. Once priorities are complete and work is ready to be done, VRSC programs will then help restore these critical habitats and salmon runs, starting with the most critical and sensitive areas.

We are developing Reduce Reuse Recycle programs: reducing carbon footprint, reusing and recycling, and looking at how we purchase materials. A new Forestry class next year taught by VHS social studies teacher Bryon Brown—a former logger— will start out as an elective class and eventually become a science class.

Knappa High School forestry teacher, Jeff Skirvin, and Mark Stanley, Logger Safety, Inc., have been partners and have offered resources and support.

Stephanie Hallock commented that Oregon Solutions brings partners together. VRSC was originally conceived as a stand-alone building where partners (PCC Rock Creek, PSU Institute of Sustainable Solutions, OSU Forestry, and UO, UNWC, etc.) could conduct programs. VRSC has expanded to encompass all partner programs that utilize all of the campus buildings and outdoor spaces, and the woods, parks and wetlands in and around Vernonia. A community survey is being developed to determine community priorities for the school center. It is exciting to see how the entire project integrates with the community. The Vernonia Project is a model for other Oregon Solutions projects statewide.

Glenn Ahrens commented that the integration of natural resources education in Vernonia schools is going well, supported through OSU Extension and the Oregon Natural Resources Education Program. Areas he is focusing on are: 1) wood science "Making More From Vernonia's Woods" and 2) watershed science - understanding and managing watersheds and forest hydrology around Vernonia (Upper Nehalem Watershed). Glenn brought OSU Forest Hydrologist Dr. Jeffrey McDonnell to visit the Pebble Creek watershed with Weyerhaeuser forester Steve McNulty on February 14. Plans are to focus on the Upper Nehalem watershed geology and to apply recent discoveries in forest hydrology. One such discovery is that in watersheds such as the Nehalem, the river water may be many years old - most of it is from stored groundwater pushed out the bottom of the system - not the recent rainwater falling on the hills. It will take time to develop local projects from this; we are making the connections now, planting new seeds today for projects tomorrow.

Kelly Marks commented that OSU, PSU and PCC staff members have conducted field visits to see how they can contribute to and benefit from the VRSC. PCC students will be assisting VMS students in an after-school program. A positive outcome has been that higher education institutions have been working together, which is not as common as we'd like.

School Project Update:

Dr. Ken Cox, Steve Effros

Dr. Cox commented that the new school construction is going well. Steve reported that there is a webcam on the school district website. The design is being finalized. We are a few weeks away from the pouring of the foundation of the gym. Once that is done, things will move quickly. P&C construction will take the secondary building (formerly referred to as the VRSC building) as a separate bid to provide as much local involvement as possible.

ODOT is taking over design and funding of the new road. The wetland component of the permitting process requires a full design for the mitigation site. The design is complete and the construction phase will be in July – Oct. this year. Steve is working with the wetland design team to work on how it will be built. We are working with the Energy Trust of Oregon and Bonneville Power on energy efficiency for the school to secure tax incentives and cost savings on maintenance and operations over time.

Federal

Jason Hitzert

Senators Merkley and Wyden and Representative Wu sent a letter last Friday supporting a biomass boiler. The Oregon Dept. of Energy is working with us to complete the details for the pledged \$1.1 million in ARRA funds for energy features; about \$500k goes to a biomass boiler. Alissa thanked the great representation from Merkley, Wu and Wyden's offices for this project.

FEMA update

Dan Brown

The FEMA grant of \$11.2 million is now in the state; the county will be the sub grantee.

March 29 FEMA recognition event

John Donovan

Federal, state and local support has been critical in securing FEMA support. FEMA Region X director Ken Murphy will attend the March 29 ceremony along with Governor Kitzhaber. The area the schools currently inhabit will become the new Spencer Park, creating 1+ acres of land for a community park from the "Welcome to Vernonia" sign to the green bridge.

Timeframe for the March 29th event: 8am continental breakfast, 9am ceremony, 9:40am tour of the site. Dan Brown reported that a lot of work must still be done to complete the FEMA award process. A working review of the process will be done after the March 29 event. The first draw (a reimbursement for all of the qualified pre-award costs that were necessary to the FEMA process) will be done thereafter, then the purchase (buyout) of the school site. Sharon Bernal asked if the bricks from WGS could be used another way? Parts of the building will be used including the bricks, in accordance with FEMA/historical society requirements. Summer of 2013 is the beginning of the building demolition.

State Updates:

Mark Ellsworth

Mark thanked the leadership students in the room for their participation and noted that they are witnessing democracy in action. He said that Governor Kitzhaber is aware of this project through the Oregon Solutions program, and that Vernonia is unique in that so many people have worked together to make the community viable after a natural disaster. Governor Kitzhaber is taking a process modeled on what we have done in Vernonia and expanding it to the rest of the state, launching five Regional Solutions Centers across the state.

Dick Townsend, Director of Oregon Solutions, said he was excited to be here to see the work first-hand. He thanked Alissa and Stephanie on behalf of Oregon Solutions. Gov. Kitzhaber, who started Oregon Solutions in his first term and now chairs the advisory committee, will meet with the committee (which includes Tom Kelly) on March 22 and re-designate Vernonia as a project. Oregon Solutions' legislative funding ends on June 30; because it's housed at PSU, its funding will be in the higher education budget, and future funding is unclear. However Oregon Solutions feels a commitment to Vernonia and will help where it can.

Private Sector Campaign Update:

John Donovan

John distributed a Vernonia Schools Project Funding Update. The process started with a \$13 million bond and has now passed the \$30 million mark. The passage of the school bond made the campaign possible because the community stepped up to make the down payment. Besides the bond, the local community has committed almost \$100k: \$10k pooled from the Alumni event, \$60k from one VHS alum, \$10k from Sentry match, \$15k pledge from Wauna Credit Union.

On Jan 31, Sen. Johnson, Tony Hyde, John Donovan, Alissa Keny-Guyer and VSD staff visited the Wauna Mill of Georgia Pacific; different mills chipped in to support Vernonia with a \$50k gift, the largest gift of its kind in their history. Wauna and GP have also offered to assist with sustainability efforts, since they have biomass boilers on their plants.

Lora L and Martin N. Kelley Family Foundation Trust made a \$100k gift so far as part of The Ford Family Foundation (TFFF) match. Two Kelley Family visited with Ken Cox, John Donovan and Alissa Keny-Guyer March 5 and were excited about the vision and progress. Another partnership is with Hands on Art (HOA). A Murdock Foundation application for \$350k is the result of a partnership with HOA to manage community center activities on the campus. John thanked the HOA leadership for helping make that possible. The campaign is 1/3 of the way towards the TFFF match. If the Murdock application is approved, we will be at 3/4.

John discussed efforts planned for the next 18 months. The 2011-12 community campaign will begin with publicity and awareness building; Clear Channel has offered assistance. We are having conversations with United Way of Columbia County to determine if United Way in a statewide level can be a campaign partner. The campaign will explore a peer-to-peer outreach to convince students, municipalities and citizens across the state to support Vernonia's school rebuilding efforts.

VEF First Annual Celebrity Golf Tournament: Ken Cox

The tournament is planned for Sept. 17, Saturday 9am-3pm at Vernonia Golf Club: 18 holes, prizes, raffle and auction. Gordon Smith of Sentry Market and Vernonia Golf Club will be sponsors. VEF was established as a funding vehicle for the schools, initially for funding the new buildings, but in the future to assist with district needs, scholarships, etc.

Community Project Updates: Heather Lewis, Bill Haack

Alissa introduced the Community Updates portion of the agenda by explaining that Oregon Solutions' role is to assist with the schools *in alignment with other* rebuilding efforts in the community.

Heather Lewis reported that the Vernonia Health Center Board is faced with moving out of the flood plain and re-contracting with a provider. Coastal Family Health was most viable option as a Federally Qualified Health Clinic partner. The Health Center is exploring partnering with VSD for a school based health clinic. Additional partnerships are being explored to look at innovative medical care for the community.

Bill reported that the city of Vernonia owns 80 acres of land, which creates a challenge in managing that amount. It is exploring a partnership with VSD to manage the forest, where VRSC creates a cadre of students who learn forest management practices. The City and school both need to create wetlands between the wastewater lagoons and lake, so they are exploring partnerships on wetland management using native plants. These partnerships will result in improved wastewater management and wetland mitigation, City budget savings by removing duties from public works staff, and job creation/training for students.

Bill explained some of the elements students could work on through the process of rebuilding the lagoons. The lagoons were breached during the last flood; they must be redesigned and at least one lagoon will be elevated; managing the bio swale of

all three lagoons will be projects with collaborative potential. Bill will work with Ken and Aaron to write an article on the four simultaneous strategic processes.

OSU staff members are working through the Vernonia Economic Development Committee (VEDC) and a network of collaborators to conduct a two-year process of developing economic and social indicators to determine measures for community vitality? I.e., in five years what do we want to see improve? OSU will return in five years to check to see if we are on track.

Susan Laurie and Michael Hibbert, working with TFFF and the three Ford cohorts, are assessing how the leadership institute worked for individuals and how they are using information learned; they will write a series of articles to showcase lessons learned from the program.

Rose Ave project: the state and city are collaborating on several fronts. DEQ issued a "No further action" letter, which allows the city to develop the land. Oregon Parks and Recreation and the city of Vernonia are working on an exchange agreement for the Rose Ave land. Meyer Memorial Trust awarded the Community Action Team \$50k to continue work on this project. Expect future applications. With the city acquisition of 45 acres of new open space (40 single family lots, school site, clinic, WOEC, etc.), management will be a challenge, given the limited equipment (one lawn mover) and public works budget.

The Steering committee agreed that continued collaboration is needed to meet all of the rebuilding and economic development challenges.

*Steering Com meetings: 2nd Tuesday every other month, 2-3:30pm, Vernonia