

Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership

Media Advisory

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Vancouver Lake Partnership effort gets cooperative boost

Vancouver (Oct. 9, 2006) – Efforts to find answers to the health and future of the popular Vancouver Lake are getting a boost, thanks to two new studies and a donation from the Vancouver Lake Sailing Club.

At a recent meeting of the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership, the Portland District Office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced it will provide \$100,000 from its Lower Columbia River Ecosystem Restoration Program to formulate a Corps project team and begin studying the feasibility of improvements to the lake's water quality and habitat. The program focuses on mitigating and improving migratory, salmonid fish habitat.

The lake is attracting more collaboration with a proposed Washington State University Vancouver (WSU-V) study of some of the tiniest lake dwellers - planktonic algae, planktonic protozoa and planktonic animals. Founding agencies of the Vancouver Lake Partnership, which brings together citizen stakeholders with federal, state and local public agencies with interest and jurisdiction over Vancouver Lake and its watershed, anticipate the WSU-V work will begin this fall.

The intensified focus on the lake also has sparked a \$1,000 donation by the Vancouver Lake Sailing Club, a 100-member club which touts the lake as the best small boat racing water in the Portland/Vancouver area.

Vancouver Lake, located on the western edge of Clark County within the Columbia River floodplain, is a highly complex system of which much is still unknown.

A century of human activities such as dam construction, flood control, urban and industrial development, and agricultural practices have greatly altered Vancouver Lake, its lowlands and watershed. Since the late 1960s, lake uses have been frequently limited in the late summer due to nuisance bluegreen algal blooms.

Such closures were a key driver in the 2004 formation of the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership by the Port of Vancouver, City of Vancouver Public Works, Clark County Public Works, Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation and the Fruit Valley Neighborhood Association. In August 2006, the founding governmental agencies signed an agreement that will provide them with the management tools needed to seek and secure funding for the Partnership.

Since its formation, the Partnership has been engaged in presentations and discussions aimed at understanding the tasks at hand and building a solid foundation for future work. Much of that discussion has focused on the need for additional technical studies that will help the committee members evaluate possible options for the lake's future. The Corps and proposed WSU Vancouver studies are the first major steps in that direction.

In September, the Corps completed a Preliminary Restoration Plan for the lake. According to Corps officials, the best next step, given the dynamics and complexity of lake issues, would be a General Investigation (GI) study in order to come up with viable, long-term solutions. Currently, however, the Corps does not have the needed Congressional authorization to begin new GI efforts. Until such

authorization can be obtained, a study under the Lower Columbia Restoration Program is seen as the next best option.

The proposed WSU Vancouver study would have a team of aquatic ecology scientists and research associates study cyanobacteria, commonly known as bluegreen algae, in Vancouver Lake over at least a year's period of time. Part of their work could include preliminary investigations into the factors influencing the algae blooms and analysis of existing data for patterns and trends.

Vancouver Lake is an important asset to the community. Endangered Species Act-listed salmonids have been identified in Vancouver Lake and the flushing channel that connects Vancouver Lake to the Columbia River. The lake also provides habitat for migratory and resident waterfowl, raptors and songbirds. It also serves as recreational amenity for the Vancouver-Portland metro area, with a 234-acre regional park and an abundance of water-dependent activities, such as sailing, canoeing and crew.

The Partnership is working to increase public understanding and involvement in issues surrounding the lake and its lowlands. Members of the Vancouver Lake Partnership include nine citizen members and the Port of Vancouver, City of Vancouver Public Works, Clark County Public Works, Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation, Port of Ridgefield, Clark County Health Department, Clark Public Utilities, Washington Department of Ecology, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. More information about the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership is available on the Internet at www.vancouverlakepartnership.org.

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