The McKenzie River Discovery Center
Its purpose and progress

By Scott Halpert

Randy Dersham is a McKenzie River resident, a wooden boat builder, river runner, and a 30-year professional creator of digital entertainment for computers, video games and mobile phones. He is applying this unique combination of experience as the executive director of the McKenzie River Discovery Center, which will be a world-class collection of exhibits and interactive experiences that teach visitors about the rare geology of the river, its cultural history, the important ecosystem, and it’s irreplaceable value for the future.

The crystal-clear, spring-fed McKenzie River is a favorite of mountain bikers, hikers, campers and those enjoying rafting over its thrilling rapids. It has sparked the creation of world-famous boats specially designed to navigate rocky whitewaters, boats that have nourished a thriving fishing, guiding and boating culture. The river is the source of clear, clean drinking water for 200,000 people in Eugene, the second largest city in the state.

And yet, there is no focal destination for travelers to this area renowned for its beauty and recreation. There is also no central place to educate the public, and especially the next generation, about its special character and the importance of becoming its stewards. The McKenzie River Discovery Center is being developed to be that place. This presentation will describe the travel destination that is being planned and will outline the educational experiences that will physically and emotionally engage visitors through digital entertainment.

- Experience your river
- Understand its value
- Protect its future

MONTHLY MEMBERS MEETING
Please check your calendar and make sure that the monthly meeting of the McKenzie Fly Fishers is there in bold print – Monday, Aug. 19, at Willie’s Restaurant. 400 Industrial Way, Springfield. Drinks and time to chat and mingle at 6 pm, dinner at 7, speakers at 8. All are welcome. Find the club at mckenzieflyfishers.wordpress.com and on Facebook (limited to members).
Prez Sez

By Jim Rhoten

Shit happens

Last fall I was steelhead fishing on the Willamette. I put in at the Springfield bridge and rowed up stream. I swung flies for a couple hours with no takers. It was a beautiful morning and I was having a GOOD DAY!

As I went under the Springfield bridge, I decided to fish a deep slot with Czechs nymphs. I anchored beside the slot and after a few drifts, I had a steelhead on. GOOD DAY!

I got him up to the boat, and was near the net when he got off. BAD DAY!

I continued fishing down to the island across from Roaring Rapids Pizza and realized I couldn’t make it to the D Street landing and the restroom, so I beached the boat and grabbed the toilet paper and headed for the willows. GOOD DAY!

When I finished, I decided to fish the backside of the island and when I returned to the boat — it wasn’t where I had anchored it. BAD DAY!

In my haste, I forgotten to pull the boat farther up on the sand and a gust of wind pulled the boat into the water. Now, my boat was heading towards the pizza parlor rapid with my anchor out the back of the boat, my oars in the water, my life jacket on the seat and my bike in the back of the boat. BAD DAY!

I headed towards the shore as my boat made an almost perfect run of the rapid, only hitting one rock. When I made it to shore, I started running on the bike path towards the D Street landing.

I was hoping I could catch up to my boat near the landing in the slower water. I knew I probably would have to swim for my boat, as I knew the boat wouldn’t survive the low-head dam.

On my approach to the landing, I saw a pickup with an empty boat trailer on the landing, then I noticed the owner of that boat was rowing out towards my runaway boat. GOOD DAY!

At that time I noticed an older woman talking on her cell phone and off in the distance I could hear sirens. Oh no! The woman on the phone called the fire department. BAD DAY! Especially since I am a retired fireman and was on the water rescue team for many years.

Luckily, I convinced the women that it was my boat, and no one was lost or hurt, and she could call off the rescue team. Surprisingly she believed this sweating, panting old man, who had run half mile in waders with a pole and a wading staff. The sirens stopped. GOOD DAY!

The nice man returned my boat to shore. GOOD DAY! I thanked him profusely for helping me out.

At this point, I was feeling how lucky I was not to have my boat damaged and not to have to deal with my old buddies from the fire department. But then, up drives the fire department’s battalion chief. BAD DAY!

He said he was close and decided to check it out even though the water rescue team was returned to quarters.

Fortunately, the chief was from Springfield and I hadn’t worked with him. I shared my story of what had happened, and we had a good laugh. After he left, I decided it might be best not to push my luck and didn’t continue to fish.

We all have good days and bad days on the river, and eventually shit happens to us all.

Be safe out there.

— Jim (jerhoten@yahoo.com)
The North Fork and our club

By Bob Bumstead

Jim Dougher has designed a hum-dinger of an outing Aug. 24 on the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the Willamette, and he asked me to describe the McKenzie Flyfishers’ long history with the river.

Personal history

I first fished the North Fork in July 1965 guided by fellow teacher Wayne Veatch, who for some reason chose me as his clueless fishing companion. The day after I bought my first fly outfit, Wayne drove me to “Super Pool” just upstream from Westfir. After a couple of hours, I was hooked. For many years Wayne and I fished the North Fork once a week from July through the end of the season. I thought I was an exceptional angler as I always came home with a 10-fish limit stuffed into my wicker creel. Of course, they were hatchery trout, and when ODFW stopped planting the North Fork in the mid ’70s, I had to revise my estimation of my abilities as I came to more fully appreciate the wonders of wild fish.

After Wayne left, I persuaded Glen Love and my brother to share my enthusiasm for the North Fork. We named all of its pools and runs and fished it every time we could each summer and fall.

Nukes

A few years after Glen introduced me to the Flyfishers in 1969, EWEB notified the public that it planned to build a nuclear power plant in Lane County. The facility would need to cool its reactor by drawing 100 CFS of water out of a river, and the North Fork was one proposed source. I checked the USGS flow records and found that during the fall the North Fork flow occasionally dropped below 100 CFS, rendering it useless as a water supply. I presented this evidence at an EWEB board meeting, and the board withdrew the North Fork proposal. Later the Eugene Future Power Committee, including Glen and Rhoda Love, was able to stop EWEB from building a nuke anywhere.

Dams

The late ’70s and early ’80s saw the beginning of a craze for low-head hydro development. Both the Springfield Utility Board and the Emerald Peoples’ Utility District decided that the North Fork and its source, Waldo Lake, would be suitable for power generation. SUB wanted to build two low-head dams on the North Fork to channel its flow into pipes that would run for miles and then drop the water through turbines. That system would dewater long stretches of the river, decimating the wild trout population.

EPUD wanted to reopen Klovdahl Dam on Waldo Lake and drop Waldo’s waters down Black Creek turning a turbine, then filling a small reservoir during peak power periods. Using cheaper power during low-demand periods, they would then pump the reservoir water back up into Waldo so it could be used again. This project would have turned one of purest lakes in the world into an hourly fluctuating reservoir.

Glen and I, by that time co-chairs of the Flyfishers’ Conservation Committee, resolved that we needed to try to keep SUB and EPUD from defiling the North Fork and Waldo. We enlisted club members Jim Williams and...
John Gage into the fight and approached the leaders of Oregon Natural Resources Council to help us figure out how to defeat the projects. They suggested that we try to get the Legislature to declare both the North Fork and Waldo as State Scenic Waterways. Such a designation would prohibit the proposed projects.

**The campaign**

We knew we first had to build public support for preserving the North Fork and Waldo and use that support to convince our legislators to back a bill declaring those two natural wonders a State Scenic Waterway. We put together a slide show that would illustrate just how special these waters were, and took the slide show to as many venues as possible. At a town meeting at Oakridge High School auditorium, the large audience gave powerful public testimony. The owner of town’s only pizza parlor wept as he recounted his childhood encounters with the river. A young man dressed in a hard hat, “tin pants,” and red suspenders indentified himself as a “gypo” logger. He told us that he had done many horrible things in the woods as a logger, but none as horrible as putting dams on the North Fork.

At the end of the meeting, Oakridge native Mason Williams approached us. He was a star of the prime-time Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour and had a number one record (Classical Gas). He offered to help. Jim Williams worked with Mason on a fundraising concert for the Hult Center to publicize the plight of the North Fork and Waldo. This was birth of the concert series “Of Time and Rivers Flowing” which played two nights at the Hult to packed houses, and we showed our slide show to a much wider audience. We also used the proceeds of the show to start the Flyfishers’ Conservation Fund. Mason and friends then took the concert on tour all over the nation to fight for other environmental causes.

**The Legislature**

Soon we had local legislators eager to sponsor a Wild and Scenic Waterway bill and we were off to Salem to lobby for it. The bill had hit a snag in a Senate committee. A number of senators disliked the bill because it might restrict logging in the area. But club member Dave Copeland was a life-long friend with the most powerful conservative member of the committee. Dave had a long talk with his longtime friend. Every opposition member voted no until Dave’s friend voted yes. One by one the other opposition senators changed their votes, and the committee recommended our bill for passage to the full Senate, where it received almost unanimous support. The House soon followed suit. When Gov. Atiyeh signed it, Scenic Waterway Status fully protected the North Fork and Waldo. Later, we were able to feature our club’s efforts in an article in the Federation of Flyfishers’ magazine. A few years later an omnibus federal conservation bill gave the North Fork and Waldo federal scenic waterway protection, and I was able to serve on the citizens’ advisory committee to establish management guidelines for the watershed.

**Cliff Adams**

No report of the club’s history with the North Fork would be complete without referencing Cliff Adam’s passion for the river. Cliff parked his old camper in a stunning meadow up above Kiahane campground for extended periods of time each summer and fished the upper North Fork enthusiastically each day. He loved having guests come up and camp with him, and he introduced many MFF and Cascade Family Flyfishers to fishing the upper river. Cliff’s favorite fly, the North Forker, was a most sought-after prize at club auctions. Bill Laing’s story about Cliff is in his book starting on page 163 titled “North Fork, a Mystery (in Memory of Cliff Adams).”

Sorry for the long-windedness of this account and having to leave out the contributions of many other Flyfishers. But Jim Dougher and I wanted you to know how important the North Fork has been in our club’s history. We hope that many of you will be able to make the outing. See you there.
Changes afoot for our auction

By Greg Williams

Surprising as it may seem, the MFF annual fundraiser Nov. 18 is not much more than two months away. At the first committee meeting last week we arranged a few things, made a decision or two and spent some time talking about strategies for collecting and processing donations for the auctions.

The 2019 fundraiser will continue the auction overhaul started last year. Our 2018 event was an exhausting success, but there is still plenty of work to do. We need to shorten the event by at least an hour. We also need to allow our bidders more time to roam about the tables of the silent auction, and those tables need to have fewer items and less crowding. We think most of this can be accomplished by eliminating the sit-down dinner.

This year, tables for the silent auction will be spread through both the foyer and the dining hall at Willies. Platters of appetizers, available throughout the silent auction, will replace the sit-down dinner. In time, as silent auction tables close, the dining hall will be reconfigured for the live auction. The presentation before the live auction will be short. This is a big change for us, and there are many things to work out, but we anticipate a more efficient event that will save time and cost less to produce.

Considering the mayhem, checkout last year was fairly efficient. We finished in less than 40 minutes, and no one was injured. Nevertheless, the checkout process was a mess, and we need further development in this area. Our goal for 2019 is to have check-out finished in under 30 minutes, with minimal ruckus behind the scenes. We had too few computers on site last year, which caused delays and undermined organization all evening. We will solve that problem by renting several iPads for the event and by doing early recruiting of volunteers to take data entry shifts throughout the evening. We also need to make significant improvements in the way we connect winning bidders with their items.

We have an excellent and experienced group of volunteers to canvas the community for auction donations. The committee will do most of the collection work, but we need your help too. If each member brings in just one donation, our fundraiser is sure to be a smashing success. Do you know a business owner who might make donation? Is there a restaurant you visit often? If so, a donation of dinner for two might be paired with tickets to a performance by the Eugene Concert Choir. I know I can get those ECC tickets, because I sing with that group and because they gave us two sets of tickets last year. Any connection you might have around town could be the source of a nice donation. Do not be put off if your business connection has nothing to do with fly fishing. A wide range of auction items will make the evening much more interesting for the non-fishing spouses we hope will attend.

Of course, we don't want six of our members accosting Chapalas for dinner-for-two donations. The committee is developing a Google spreadsheet that will track which members have volunteered to approach specific businesses. We are also preparing information packets for our volunteers. You will have a set of instructions, a sample script for making a request, a color handout that describes the fundraiser on one side and the Salmon Watch program on the other, and forms to record information about donations and donors.

Now that we have the fundraiser set in motion, you can expect to hear from us regularly. Our conservation programs and the club-sponsored fishing trips depend critically on funds collected at our auction. We have only one fundraiser each year, and this is it. Keep the McKenzie Flyfishers healthy and active. Volunteer to help, collect an auction item or two, or just be prepared to show up and spend money on Nov. 18.

With the fundraiser starting to hang over my head, I am nevertheless still in the middle of summer adventures. I just returned last week from a float down the Lower Salmon with Bruce and Edie Anderson, and I leave again tomorrow morning to fish for golden trout high in the Sierra Nevada with Jim Rhoten and Dick Barnhart. I get to fish with quite a few folks because we have a healthy organization with a long history. Let's keep it going by working together to have the best fundraiser yet.
Umpqua bass blast
Otherwise known as the MFF
Cornhole Championship

By Clint Brumitt

Members gathered at the Umpqua RV Park upriver from Elkton Aug. 6 and began what is coming to be an annual event. This is usually caused by the doldrums of summer heat and the question of where to go and catch fish? The lower Umpqua is the answer, most years.

Club members Mark Rauch, Ted Taylor, Jeff DeVore, wife Joanie and granddaughter Grace, Jim and Dottie Dougher, Marvin Fickle, Clint Brumitt, Dan Robinhold, Mark Campbell and his friend Josh were in attendance. Everyone I believe caught fish, but reaching double figures was rare for most anglers on a given day. The sunny afternoon of the 6th turned into a day-long marine air cloud cover on the 7th. By the 8th, as we were leaving, rain started to sprinkle. So, it is easy to blame the less than fruitful performance on the weather, because it certainly should not fall upon this hard-working cadre of anglers.

Mark Rauch left us for the morning to fish the Big K ranch waters. He had some success and combined with his persistence on the camp waters, he was probably top rod for the trip.

We had a great potluck evening meal on Wednesday the 7th and that lead to the unofficial tournament. The RV park has a cornhole game. Look it up on Google if you do not know what it is. We discovered that if you are among the retired crowd, you cannot accurately toss anything in any direction, consistently. And if you used to play slow-pitch softball, you have an advantage over those who just played angler.

New club member Marvin Fickle joined us and it was nice to meet him and learn about his experiences. If you see Marvin at a future outing, you will have about one hour in the first evening to learn his new club nickname. Hint, he is not a former big league relief pitcher.

Our next outing Aug. 24 will be led by fishmaster Jim Dougher. Be on the lookout for his great detailed data form that will assist you in finding fishing water on the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the Willamette. (See story on Page 3.)

The Gold Lake outing is the weekend of Sept. 13-15. The club board of directors will serve as the fishmasters for this great annual event.

Clint Brumitt is our outings chair
East Lake club outing

Fishing was great but catching was slow at our East Lake club outing July 26-28. A lot of members showed up for “Phil & Tom’s Great Adventure” despite the long drive (it was short for Steven Savill who now lives in La Pine). We gathered at the RV park across from the resort for a tasty lunch that Saturday. Late evening provided the most fish action and Mark Rauch put in the hours and appears to have landed the biggest trout, says he’s not sure how big it was but it filled his net and put up quite a fight.

Mark Campbell (left) sent in this photo (above) of a beautiful catch on East Lake.
Gold Lake has proven to be productive since the road opened this spring, and club members have been going up all summer, catching both rainbows and brook trout (which can be taken home for dinner). Here, Carolyn Mason and Steve Brehm show off their stringer of brookies. Gold Lake is the site of one of our club’s best attended outings (with contest and fish fry). This year it will be Sept. 13-15.

2019 Board & Committees
President: Jim Rhoten
President elect: Greg Williams
Secretary: Dave Thomas
Treasurer: Mark Campbell
At-large board: Bob Howell, Monte Matthews, Tom Fauria, Peggy Roga
Auction: Greg Williams (head), Peggy Roga (donations), Jim Rhoten, Steve Hackett
Website: Liz Yocom
Membership: Dick Barnhart (head), Steve Hackett (host), Peggy Roga (host)

Newsletter: Ted Taylor
Outings: Clint Brumitt
Library: Carolyn Mason
Holiday party: Tom Fauria
Annual picnic: Jeff DeVore
Conservation: Arlen Thomason
Education: Tim Knerr, Clint Brumitt
FFI rep.: Terry Willis
Lawsuit oversight: Dave Thomas, Arlen Thomason
Programs: Scott Halpert (head), Bill Laing, Dan Robinhold, Mike Starr, Mike Brinkley

INVITATION TO JOIN
You do not have to be an expert fly fisher to join the McKenzie Flyfishers. Our monthly meetings are an excellent opportunity to meet other area anglers, to have the best of regional experts on subjects dear to the hearts of fly fishers — and our outings and classes are wonderful ways to hone skills and lead local waters first-hand. Interested? Just curious? Contact Dick Barnhart, (541) 501-1774.

Have stories and photos for the newsletter? Email Ted Taylor at juliated@comcast.net

Our club’s Life Members
- Jim Boyd
- Bob Bumstead
- Jim Dougher
- Skip Hosfield
- Bill Laing
- Hal Legard
- Glen Love
- Frank Moore
- Peter Patricelli
- Bob Rasmussen
- Mike Starr
- Dave Thomas