

Stream health education in the spotlight at Rogue River Fish Migration Day Festival

By Jason McMillen
of the Daily Courier

It's no easy task swimming upstream, even if you're a fish. That's why credit was given where it was due on Saturday — at the second annual Rogue River Fish Migration Day Festival.

The event, organized by the Rogue River Watershed Council and held at North Middle School, aimed to educate the public about

stream health through a wide variety of educational, family friendly activities.

A particularly popular station was the stream tables, where children had an opportunity to learn about stream activity and experiment with cause and effect.

"It's really hard to stop the water," said 5-year-old Roy Bigelow. "I wish we had a shovel!"

Turn to FISH, Page 5A

Fish From 1A

While Roy played with the table's rocks and sand in order to manipulate flow and direction of the stream, his 3-year-old sister, Ari, was having a ball with the rubber animals that represented the wide range of life that streams support.

Both learned a little something about streams in their own way.

"Look," the girl shouted. "The duck's making splashes!"

Roy and Ari were brought to the event by their father, Robert Bigelow, who is a life-long resident of the area.

He works in the IT department at Rogue Community College and tries to take his children out to do something fun every weekend. If the event is educational, that's just "icing on the cake."

"I like the event so far, and my kids obviously love the stream table," Bigelow said. "They could probably do this for hours."

The festival, which featured educational booths from over a dozen environmental groups, nonprofits and federal agencies, was accompanied by a 5-kilometer run that paralleled Gilbert Creek.

It was held to symbolize the migration pattern of several species of local fish, particularly salmon.

For children, there was a costumed dash, a race in which participants dressed up like salmon and charged toward the finish line.

Participants also took educational nature walks along Gilbert Creek, which were led by stream experts from members of the watershed council.

The walks featured lectures highlighting the importance of streams to both fish and people, and informed participants about ways they can help protect them.

Other activities included learning how to fly fish with the Middle Rogue Steelhead-ers, a visit to the Caterpillar, Pacifica Garden's mobile science and nature center, and Watershed Jeopardy.

"It's takes a lot of work for these organizations to get ready for this," said Donna Chickering, outreach manager for the watershed council. "We're really thankful that they stepped up to the plate for us and hope to see them all again next year."



John Raybourn, a BLM fish biologist, gets into the stream table at the Rogue River Fish Migration Day Festival with Roy Bigelow, 5, and his sister, Ari, 3.

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