

“The river is well managed, but there are challenges with the supply,” he said. “We need more water to put in the river.”

On a positive note, projects are underway to make the river more accessible to more people.

Wegener pointed out that the Tualatin River is a water trail, and on the 28 miles between Tigard’s Cook Park and Rood Bridge Park in Hillsboro, “there is no bathroom,” so a project is underway to add an access point and facilities by the river in the area where Beef Bend and Roy Rogers roads come together.

Furthermore, Dirksen said that Metro has purchased property near Farmington and River roads for another access point.

“We looked at five sites before choosing this one. It’s moving forward,” he said, noting that the preliminary design is done, permitting will begin this month, and construction is scheduled to begin next summer. “Access to the river is key to keeping it clean and healthy. It used to be used as a toilet, and now it’s been cleaned up. If people love something, they will take care of it. The river is such a wonderful asset to the community.”

Wegener explained that “farther upstream on the Tualatin is a good woody habitat in the river that is good for fish but bad for canoeing.”

However, he added that a path is going to be carefully cut through the debris to leave the habitat intact but also make it navigable to open up 10 to 15 more miles of river access.

The paddle race was just over 1 mile long, starting and ending at the Cook Park boat ramp with the turnaround at the downstream Ki-A-Kuts pedestrian bridge that joins Cook, Durham and Tualatin parks.

Dirksen had a little help in winning the race from his kayak partner Wetter, with both of them somewhat winded once they were back on dry land. Dirksen thanked Wetter for encouraging him to keep going at full speed when the end was in sight.

“That’s where I died — the last 100 yards,” said Dirksen, who has participated in seven of the eight races but won for the first time this year. “Mike was a good coach,” he added.

Davis was participating in the race for the first time, with his 3 1/2-year-old son William riding shotgun in the canoe.

“I didn’t know how he would do, but he did just fine,” said Davis, whose wife Sarah and 1 1/2-year-old son Charlie watched from shore.

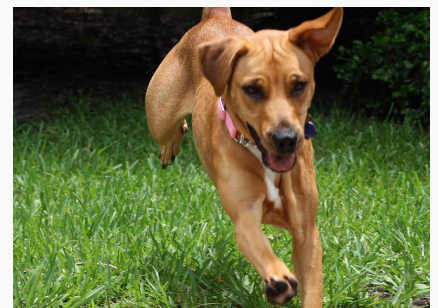
The Tualatin Riverkeepers is a local nonprofit organization working to protect and restore the Tualatin River system. The Riverkeepers, along with the Washington County Visitors Association and the Intertwine Alliance, used the occasion of the race to launch a new Tualatin River Water Trail map and signs.

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