

# JOHNSON JOHNSON LARSON & SCHALLER PC

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**Wetlands Awards - June 2007**

## NEWS & INFORMATION

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### **Eugene Attorney Art Johnson Receives Wetlands Awards**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

(June 28, 2007) -- At a recent luncheon in Eugene, Oregon, Art Johnson received the 2006 West Eugene Wetlands Award from environmental and governmental organizations including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nature Conservancy, McKenzie River Trust, Long Tom Watershed Council, City of Eugene, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Honors were given for Johnson's work in protecting a three-square mile area of native hardwood forest and wetlands extending north from Fern Ridge dam in Lane County, Oregon. The Long Tom River and Coyote Creek, flowing north from the dam through the area, converge on the 165-acre parcel which Art and his wife Anita Johnson have been restoring over the past 15 years.

In the 1940's, largely for the purposes of flood control, the Fern Ridge dam was built to stop the natural flow of the Long Tom River and Coyote Creek. At the same time, the Army Corps of Engineers excavated and straightened the Long Tom River from the dam northwards about 30 miles to its confluence with the Willamette River. This work resulted in reduced annual flooding, making much of the land more suitable for agriculture. But the changes in water flow drastically affected wildlife habitat, especially spring and fall flights of migratory birds. A major goal for the Johnsons has been to restore fish passage up the Long Tom from its confluence with the Willamette, and fish passage from the Long Tom up through Coyote Creek at least to the dam. These waters are important for native cutthroat trout, migrating salmon and salmon smelt.

In a three-mile area below the dam, the return for summer nesting of bald eagles, osprey, and red tailed hawks are one measure of the Johnson's success. So are the increased numbers of duck and geese that use the area during the spring and fall migrations. Slowly but surely, native grasses, shrubs, oak Savannah, wetland meadows, marshes and woodlands are coming back.

"We have not been doing this alone. Many others have also contributed immensely, including the staff and members of the Long Tom Watershed Council, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the McKenzie River Trust, among others. We hope to use this area as a showpiece for other folk to consider in restoring their own lands; restoring lands to their natural state is a way to increase value to an already valuable resource."

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On a visit to the area, within three miles of the Eugene airport "as the crow flies," one may see a herd of elk, deer, and depending on the season of the year, an incredible range of birds and other wildlife. Even this small area, properly preserved, can demonstrate the richness of the earth for all living things. Art and Anita Johnson have been surprised to see how quickly wildlife can return with a modest amount of effort and support.

To find out more, contact Art Johnson at Johnson, Johnson, Larson & Schaller, P.C.: (800) 783-2434.