The Marys Peak Group has joined with others to plant trees in urban areas. The Sierra Club is associated with conserving and enjoying the wild places. We are, however, beginning to understand that what we do in urbanized areas and how we get to wild places can have a direct and damaging impact upon these special places.

Highly developed areas, such as Corvallis, can generate:
1. High concentrations of air and water pollutants
2. Atmospheric and hydrologic temperature changes
3. Deteriorating habitat for migratory animals and other species
4. Incubation areas for invasive, exotic plant and animal species.

The quantity of fossil fuel burned and carbon emitted into the atmosphere as a result of our automobile and plane trips for MPG member hikes and expeditions also impact the environment.

The Conservation Team proposed, therefore, that the MPG plant trees locally within our urban areas to help compensate for the impacts of urban life and MPG activities. Trees are one of the most efficient living organisms to mitigate an impaired ecosystem.

Corvallis was chosen for the initial program. The goal is to revive Corvallis, one neighborhood at a time. This program is based upon a model created over 100 years ago when OSU Professor Margaret Snell led the Corvallis Village Improvement Society to team with churches, the Oddfellows and other organizations to plant the trees on the OSU campus, in parks and along streets. If you see an 80-100 year-old tree on campus or in town, it was probably planted by them.

In December, 2007, the MPG teamed with an existing tree-planting event the City was hosting near Adams Avenue and 8th Street. Local leaders, including MPG president Barry Wulff, provide brief “front porch speeches” to the tree planting volunteers. Dr. David Sandrock then demonstrated proper tree planting technique. Teams of 3 proceeded to plant 2” caliper trees at City-designated sites throughout the neighborhood. The event was filmed by two production companies. Volunteers then met at the home of Neighborhood Coordinator Kent Daniels for refreshments and conversation.

As a result of this successful planting, the MPG Executive Committee allocated $1,000 to fund trees for a second planting party in the College Hill area on April 12, 2008. Additional matching funds were donated by the Corvallis Oddfellows. City Forester Becky Merja worked with Neighborhood Coordinator David Sandrock and MPG Conservation Chair Dave Eckert to organize the event and locate tree-planting sites throughout the neighborhood. The enthusiastic turnout of volunteers planted many native Oregonian trees. The neighborhood is

**continued on page 2**

**MARYS PEAK GROUP HISTORY – NAMES**

Established in April 1970, the Marys Peak Group was at first without a name, simply called by other Club folks “The Corvallis Group”. Choosing the group name was a no-brainer; after all, Marys Peak is the most prominent natural feature in Benton and western Linn Counties. By the time the By-Laws were ratified we had a name. However, at first there was a contender — “Chintimini”, a local Indian name for Marys Peak, which is a Kalapuyan “spirit mountain”. Over time, Mary beat out the Indian tradition as a place name, and our organizing group decided to stick with the standard geographic name for the peak. For a fascinating discussion of these names and their history, check out one of my favorite Oregon references: Lewis A. McArthur and Lewis L. McArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names*, 7th Ed., Oregon Historical Society, 2003. I always enjoyed the fanciful idea that the name should be “Mouse Mountain” for the profile as seen from the east, but there were no takers for this one.

One thing that is hard for people to grasp is that Marys is not possessive — no apostrophe in our Group name. I think our members would shudder at such a wonderful spot as Marys Peak belonging to anyone.

Another name of interest is the Group’s newsletter name, “The Bench Mark”. Where did it come from? Although there was a plaintive note in our November 1972 newsletter, “Suggest a name for our newsletter and win a prize!” there were no takers, at first. It wasn't until June 1980 that we adopted the formal newsletter name. The prize, however, was not the driving force for naming the newsletter, but it was the insistence of our Group Chair, Rick Battson, a postal carrier, who informed us that to qualify for 2nd Class Mail we must have a formal newsletter name. Nonetheless, the prize offer was still valid, and Don Miller won this belated contest — the prize, a Sierra Club bandana! — Bob Frenkel

**continued on page 2**
Reflections from MPG Chair, Barry Wulff

It is a tradition to make New Year’s resolutions. Yet, for the few of us that do make them, we fail to follow through. Could it be that in the dreariness of winter, one day seems just like another? The week following New Year’s is very much like the prior week. To me, the vernal equinox seems a more appropriate date for making resolutions. The days are brighter and longer. Spring is upon us, and soon summer will be here. My mind and body seem more receptive to change at this time of year.

My resolution for 2008 will be to change my diet. No easy feat for me, mind you. But, what the heck, I’ll give it a shot. Perhaps if everyone would join me we all might succeed together.

Michael Pollan in his new book *In Defense of Food* lays out do’s and don’ts for a workable plan. He urges consuming more fresh organically grown food, less processed food. I’ll dump those processed foods, whenever possible, and seek out “real” food. He suggests sticking to the margins of the supermarket and taking less from the interior aisles. This will mean more vegetables, less meat.

As he says, we should eat the foods that our grandmother would recognize.

He makes a good case for avoiding products with high fructose corn syrup sweeteners and soy enhanced foods. Foods containing these products form the foundation of the “Western Diet”, which has been foisted upon us by agriculturalists with the support of the USDA, nutritionists, politicians, and journalists.

With the opening of the local farmer’s markets, this transition should be relatively easy. Organically grown fresh vegetables will soon be available. This will not only be good for my health, but good for the environment, too. By supporting our local “dirt” farmers, we can ensure a supply of healthy food and support the local economy. It’s good for the Valley, and it’s good for Oregon, and it’s good for us.

Can the MPG Meet the Energy Challenge?

If the electric utility company for your home is Pacific Power, then most of your energy comes from coal burning. Every time you turn on a light or appliance, carbon spews into the atmosphere, and the process of mining coal threatens more wild places.

If your electric utility company is Consumers Power, then most of your energy comes from hydropower. Hydropower is listed as “clean power” – right? While gravity does produce this power, the system is based upon obstructing our streams and rivers and disrupting the hydrological system and the ecosystem. Increasing demand for power increases demand for hydropower. There is currently a plan to place nine (9) new hydropower plants on the McKenzie River to meet our energy consumption.

Is the problem within the electric utility companies? As Pogo said in the cartoon, “We have met the enemy, and it is us.” Every electrical watt we consume destroys a part of the environment that provides us with oxygen, food, and water.

The MPG, as a partner of the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition, is stepping up to this problem and is supporting the Corvallis Energy Challenge.

Energy Trust of Oregon has made an agreement with the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition to offer this Challenge to the citizens, organizations, businesses and agencies within Benton County. Energy Trust of Oregon is a nonprofit organization dedicated to energy efficiency and renewable energy.

The Corvallis Energy Challenge extends from March, 2008 to February, 2009 and has three goals:
1. Boost energy efficiency
2. Control energy costs
3. Increase cleaner, renewable energy sources

The Challenge has set the following goals for this time period:

1. Provide Home Energy Reviews for at least 1,000 Corvallis (Benton County) pre-1993 homes. The review will include installation of up to 10 free compact fluorescent light bulbs, water-saving showerheads, and faucet aerators. The homeowner will be encouraged to install identified energy-efficiency measures throughout the house.
2. At least 50 small and mid-sized businesses will receive free energy assessments accompanied by a long-term working agreement for follow-up.
3. Manufacturing and industrial businesses will be encouraged to participate in a free assessment.
4. At least 65 homes and businesses will install new solar energy systems.

The Energy Trust will provide the funds, management and staff to perform the assessments. They will also be providing educational workshops and other motivational programs throughout the year.

The MPG encourages your to participate. Further information will be provided in our weekly MPG email updates. If you are not on this update list, contact Barry Wulff at wulffb@peak.org

To register for a home or business energy assessment or to find out how else you can participate, contact the MPG representative to the Coalition, Dave Eckert at deckert@willamettewatershed.com.

Even if you choose not to participate, start by unplugging unused appliances and turning off unnecessary lights. When you buy anything that uses electricity (even with batteries), consider energy efficiency as one of the major distinguishing factors in your selection.

Help preserve the wild places we all love: Reduce your energy consumption. — David Eckert

Urban Forest from page 1

now reviving, both ecologically and socially.

The MPG is excited about this fledgling program and encourages the support of our members. To participate in future events (Fall and Spring) or to contribute funding to this worthy cause (yes, trees do cost money), contact Dave Eckert at deckert@willamettewatershed.com.

The next tree planting party will be in Fall, 2008.

Hopefully, in 100 years, future Corvallis residents can thank the Marys Peak Group of the Sierra Club for the grand, life-nurturing trees around town. — David Eckert
Letter to the Editor: *(Please see the online Benchmark for additional letters to the editor.)*

I must raise a red flag regarding your recently authored postings in the Jan. 2008 issue of The Benchmark. On Page 2, you exhort the troops (most of whom sing in the Sierra Club choir and are already taking steps to reduce their “carbon footprint”) to “make sacrifices” and adopt such lifestyle changing measures as “drive and travel less” and “purchase a high mileage vehicle”. Worthy and sound recommendations, to be sure, both in the light of diminishing petroleum resources and global warming, but then in the same issue of our newsletter (on Page 8) you enthusiastically proclaim the joys to be had in taking a very much car-intensive trip to the far reaches of northeastern Oregon. A divine place it is and probably wonderful excursion it was, but apparently you didn’t just park your four wheeled steeds and go hiking. Instead, you used these petrol consuming, pollutant spewing machines for yet more road touring. Sorry to say, I see a huge “disconnect” here! Unless you tell me you all crammed into one very fuel-efficient vehicle (which I doubt) you are continuing in the same unsustainable, environmentally damaging mindset and behavior pattern everyone else in this country is following, with or without lip service given to the need for reducing our energy dependence, especially in the realm of hydrocarbon overusage.

If we, the majority of Sierra Club members, believe global warming is real, then we should be setting an example of group behavior that bespeaks not just a concern about but also a forthright effort to reduce our output of greenhouse gases and REALLY DO IT on all our outings and forays under the SC banner. By so doing, we will not only be committed to greenhouse gas reduction but might just get noticed and thereby influence other folks to follow a much needed ethic of throttling back on hydrocarbon consumption, with an eye toward a travel future which emphasizes mostly local jaunts.

My reason in taking you to task for what I see as a double standard was to point out that the day is fast approaching (certainly within 10 years or less if certain respected and so far right-on energy analysts are correct in interpreting crude oil supply and demand signals) when staying local will be FORCED upon us as gas gets too expensive or in limited supply. Should we not at least try to gradually segue to a lessening consumption of fossil fuel for our outdoor activities so as to do the right thing, and more importantly, remind people that a drive-your-own-car- anywhere paradigm is not longer viable and needs to change?

I wouldn’t think of laying the bigger guilt trip of the huge carbon footprint inherent with jetting hither and yon! I firmly believe the days of still-cheap jet travel will soon be behind us as the cost of fuel becomes so prohibitive that such sky arching trips will only be reserved for governmental and military entities and perhaps the very rich, until the crude oil taps really run dry. -- Karl Hartzell

SIGN-UP FOR THE WEEKLY EMAIL

The Marys Peak Group offers many activities other than those listed in the Benchmark. Our weekly email announces upcoming events and activities with complete contact information. There are also updates of our scheduled activities.

You may sign up to receive the weekly email by sending a note to Jane Luther at janeluther@gmail.com Or, if you have a Google account, you can subscribe by going to: http://groups.google.com/group/marys-peak-group/subscribe You should choose: Email - Send each message to me as it arrives. (“Approximately 1 email per day” is incorrect; MPG weekly email is sent once a week). Your email information will not be shared with other entities.

MPG ExCom
Barry Wulff, Chair
wulffb@peak.org
Jane Luther, Vice -Chair
Leslie Hogan, Secretary
Burt Fein
Doris deLespinasse
Randy Selig
Bob Custer
www.oregon.sierraclub.org
(Click on Marys Peak Group)

The Benchmark
Roger and Anne Tracy
roger.tracy@comcast.net

Michael Brantley - Treasurer
Kay Yates - Membership Chair

(1 to r): Steve Ford, John Nervik, Denise Nervik, Bruce Encke, Loretta Rivard, Tom Bucht, Karin Bucht, Marilyn Syverson, Judy Fowlkes, John Fowlkes, and Jack Wirz.
Late spring is here; summer's on the way. We'll do a selection of valley, coastal, and Cascades hikes. We will add more local walks, weekdays, evening, and perhaps weekends – so if you are not on our email list, see the box below right. Always fun, MPG outings also provide opportunities to explore our natural environment, learning more about the unique flora and fauna of our region and how they can be preserved.

Contact the leader before the event. Area codes are 541, unless otherwise noted. Please arrive before the stated time; we leave on time. Dress for the weather—sturdy boots or shoes, rain gear, no jeans or other heavy cotton for extended outings. Bring water, sunscreen, snacks, lunch if outing starts in the morning. Unless otherwise stated, carpool departures are from parking lot between Wilkinson Hall and the Asian Cultural Center, at Arnold and 27th Streets on the OSU campus in Corvallis. Contact leader to meet group elsewhere.

No dogs except on designated dog walks.

We suggest that riders reimburse carpool drivers at least $2.00 per person for every hour driven, more for the wear and tear of difficult roads. Thus, the Cascades might be $8.00-$10.00 or more; the coast at least $4.00-$8.00. All participants must sign a standard Sierra Club liability waiver before each outing. To read the liability waiver before you choose to participate on an outing, please see http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/, or contact the National Sierra Club Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version. Neither the Sierra Club nor the Marys Peak Group is responsible for participants during the trips to and from the trailhead.

**Sat May 3 – Tour of New Coburg Ridge Nature Conservancy Preserve.** A Nature Conservancy tour guide will take us through this newest and largest Willamette Valley preserve, near Eugene. See http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/oregon/press/press2996.html. Normally not open to the public, it preserves rare prairie and oak woodland habitats which shelter 26 species worthy of protection, including the Fender's Blue Butterfly. Moderate/strenuous; rough ground, with some steep and off-trail portions. 9:00 am. Preregister; number is limited. Steve Ford, 929-6207, sandsford@peak.org

**Thur May 8 – Chintimini Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Tour.** See how they rehabilitate injured and orphaned native wildlife and give wildlife education classes at this Corvallis organization. 1:00 pm. Meet on First Street behind the Super 8 Motel. Marilyn Hinds, 929-7136, mkhinballard@peak.org

**Sat May 10 – Marys Peak North Ridge.** We'll go up the North Ridge Trail from Woods Creek, through old growth cedar, fir, hemlock, probably some spring flowers. Views from the top can reach from the ocean to Cascade peaks. Difficult, 9 mi/2200’ gain. 9:00 am. Bruce Encke & Loretta Rivard, 753-6884, bruce.encke@hp.com

**Sat May 17 – Trail Work.** Mulkey Creek trail maintenance for Benton County Parks Dept. Tasks include reshaping and shoring up tread on the steep hill, perhaps with cribbing, graveling and other lighter tasks. We will have OSU geography students working with us. Bring work gloves, water, lunch. 8:30 am; return mid-afternoon. Margie Powell, Denise Nervik, Tom Bucht, 738-1333, tombucht@gmail.com

**Fri-Mon May 23-26 – Oregon Coast Camping Trip.** See p. 7.

**Sat May 24 – Beginner Hike at Bald Hill.** Take a walk in the Bald Hill/Mulkey Creek area near Corvallis; discuss hiking skills, etiquette, equipment. Easy, 2-3 miles, 200-300’ gain. 9:00 am. Christy Stevens, 753-4353, christy.stevens@linnbenton.edu

**Sat May 31 – Trail Work.** Bald Hill trail maintenance for Corvallis City Parks Dept. Tread reshaping, graveling and clipping, invasive removal, other tasks. Bring work gloves, water, lunch. 8:30 am; return mid-afternoon. Margie Powell, Denise Nervik, Tom Bucht, 738-1333, tombucht@gmail.com

**Sun June 1 – Dixon Creek Tour.** Tour this Corvallis urban stream from headwaters to river. Sponsored by Benton Soil and Water Conservation District with support from other organizations. Details in weekly email. (Not a Sierra Club activity). Further info: Dave Eckert, deckert@willamettewatershed.com

**Sat-Mon May 31-June 2 – North Fork, Smith River Backpack.** See p. 7.
Sat June 7 – Tapawingo Black Rock Area to Brown Mountain. Near Falls City, hike up through towering trees, with lunch in a cathedral of Douglas Fir trees at the top of Brown Mountain. See the first mountain bike trail system approved by the Oregon Department of Forestry. Challenging courses and jumps of native materials blend into the forest. Moderate, 7.5mi/1,700’ gain. 9:00 am. Jane Luther, 758-8279, janeluth@gmail.com

Sun June 15 – Coast Range Hike. Someplace new. See weekly emails for more information. Moderate, 5-7 mi., not more than 1,200’ gain. 9:00 am. Tom Bucht, 738-1333, TomBucht@gmail.com

Wed June 18 – Pringle Creek Tour. Tour this outstanding sustainable community in Salem. See weekly emails for more information. Pre-register. Marilyn Hinds, 929-7136, mkhinballard@peak.org

Fri-Sun June 20-22 – Indian Heaven Backpack. See p. 7.

Sat June 21 – Morning Stroll in Beazell Memorial Forest. At this beautiful woodland park in Kings Valley near Philomath, we’ll walk a loop, up cool shaded Plunkett Creek and then to the top of the hill to the view of Marys Peak. Moderate, 4 miles maximum, 700’ gain/loss. 9:00 am. Cliff Cooper, 760-2543, cliftoncooper2002@yahoo.com


Sun June 22 – Dome Rock. A lengthy, strenuous, but well-graded and rewarding climb through rhododendrons, beargrass, other flowers and occasional grand views. At the top, 360 degree views of Mt. Jefferson, other parts of the Cascades, Tumble Lake just below, and Detroit Lake far below. Joint hike with Salem Chemeketans. 8:00 am at Wilkinson; call leader for Salem departure time/place. Difficult, 10.6 mi/3,279’ gain. Larry Davis, 503/390-8210, larrydavis@wvi.com; Doris deLespinasse

Sat June 28 – Browder Ridge. Near Iron Mountain, but higher and in many ways better. Old growth, flower-filled meadows, stupendous views – and no crowds. We’ll go up the well-graded Gate Creek trail to the upper meadows; then those who wish will scramble to the rock outcroppings and amazing views at the top. Difficult, 8.4 mi/2,100’ gain. 9:00 am. Bruce Encke & Loretta Rivard, 753-6884, bruce.encke@hp.com


Fri July 4 – Hike, Picnic, Sunset, Fireworks, Marys Peak. Join us for one or both of these: (1) Hike from the upper parking lot down East Ridge, across Tie Trail, and back. Then picnic dinner at summit. Bring picnic, warmer clothing for breezes. Moderate, 4-5 mi/1,000’ gain. (2) After dinner, hike short trail to summit, watch sunset, wait for fireworks in Corvallis, Salem, Albany, Newport and Eugene. Return to Corvallis before midnight. Bring warm clothes, blanket or sleeping bag, flashlights, camp chairs, binoculars, food and drink to share. Easy, 1.5 miles/350’ gain. Option #1: Wilkinson, 4:15 pm. If doing only Option #2, meet at Marys Peak upper parking lot, 8:00 pm. Doris deLespinasse, 753-4775, ddeles@proaxis.com; Robert Verhoogen. Rain cancels both.

Wed July 9 – Iron Mountain Flowers and Geology. Hike to Oregon’s premier wildflower meadows and stunning Cascade views. Ralph Naiziger will help us understand some of the geology. Moderate, 6.6 mi/1900 ft. Meet at 8:00 am, First Street parking area behind the Super 8 Motel. Number may be limited. Doris deLespinasse, 753-4775, ddeles@proaxis.com; Robert Verhoogen.


Sat July 12 – Philomath Area Wineries Tour. Spend the afternoon visiting and tasting at some of the small wineries located in and around Philomath. Bring your lunch and we’ll start with a picnic at one of the wineries. Transportation will be provided. Fee to cover tasting and transportation. 12:00 noon. Pre-register by June 27. Steve Ford, 929-6207, sandsford@peak.org

Sun July 13 – Beazell Memorial Forest Dog Walk. With or without a dog, walk the lovely shaded gravel roads and creekside trails at this Benton County park in Kings Valley, near Philomath. Dogs must be under leash or voice control at all times, be well-behaved and non-aggressive to people and other dogs. Easy/moderate, 3 mi./600’ gain. 9:00 am. Kay Yates, 754-0463, kyates@peak.org; Monika Shepherd, 754-5994.

Sun July 20 – Mt. Scott. Starting from near the McKenzie Highway, hike into the Mt. Washington Wilderness past mountain lakes to high meadows, probably lingering wildflowers, and at the top an aerial view of the entire route, plus half a dozen Cascade peaks. Moderate, 8-10 mi/1300’ or more gain. Limited to 12; wilderness area. 8:00 am. Leslie Hogan, 924-0130, qwizats@peak.org; Karl Hartzell.

Sat July 26 – Battle Ax Mountain. Spectacular loop to highest peak in Bull of the Woods Wilderness. Views from Mt. Ranier to Marys Peak. 8:00 am. Moderate, 5.6 mi/1,600’ gain. Limited to 12; wilderness area. Larry Davis, 503/390-8210, larrydavis@wvi.com

Sun July 27 – Oak Creek Loop Hike in McDonald Forest. We’ll go up well-shaded roads and the Uproute Trail. An early start will make this loop trail a breeze. Moderate, 4.5 mi/690’ gain. 7:30 am. Barry Wulff, 929-6272, wulffb@peak.org; Robert Verhoogen.

Sat Aug 2 – Headwaters of the Metolius. We will follow this “most magical of Oregon rivers” from the Lower Canyon Creek Campground, downstream to the Wizard Falls Fish Hatchery, and then back. Lunch at the hatchery (we won't eat the fish). Long drive, but an easy walk. 5.5 miles, 100’ gain/loss. 8:00 am. Cliff Cooper, 760-2543, cliftoncooper2002@yahoo.com

Sun Aug 3 – Finley Wildlife Preserve. A leisurely walk on the shaded Mill Hill Loop at Finley Wildlife Preserve south of Corvallis. Gentle ups and downs through varied forest types and beside the Gray Creek Swamp. 3.1 mi/220’ gain. 9:00 am. Karl Hartzell, 758-2275, karlerun@yahoo.com

Sat Aug 9 – Cape Lookout. Walk through a dense forest of gnarled spruce and hemlock on this narrow, cliff-edged cape jutting into the Pacific. We may stop at a local café for warm pie a la mode after the hike. Easy, 4.8 mi/400’ gain. 8:00 am. Jim & Nancye Ballard, 752-4441, ballardjn@gmail.com

Sun Aug 10 – Evening Float/Potluck Picnic on the Willamette. See below.

Sat Aug 16 – Corvallis-area Hike. A well-shaded, moderate level hike somewhere near Corvallis. See weekly email for details. Lelia Barlow; lelia.trips@gmail.com (e-mail preferred); 758-8279.

Sat Aug 23 – Patjens Lakes. The Patjens Lakes Trail, near the Santiam Pass, is the only moderate day hike in the Mt. Washington Wilderness. This mostly forested hike will take you to small lakes with views of Mt. Washington, the Three Sisters, and other Cascade peaks, then to a beach on Big Lake. Easy/moderate, 6 mi/400’ gain. Limited to 12; wilderness area. 8:00 am. Randy Selig, 738-0753, rselig@mindspring.com

Sat-Sun Aug 30-Sept 7 – PCT Backpack V. See p. 7

Sat Aug 30 – Three Marys Peak Summit Hikes – North Ridge, East Ridge, Meadow Edge. A Labor Day weekend tradition. For all of us, great views from the top, from the ocean to the Cascades on a clear day. (1) North Ridge Trail to the Summit. From Woods Creek Road through heavy Douglas fir, cedar, and Noble fir forests. Difficult, 9.4 mi/2300’ gain. 8:00 am. Doris deLespinasse, 753-4775, ddeles@proaxis.com (2) East Ridge to Summit. From Conner’s Camp, up though large firs, vistas over the coast range. Moderate, 7 mi/1500’ gain. 9:00 am. Barry Wulff, 929-6272, wulfb@peak.org (3) This year we’ll add an easier option – hike around the meadow, through the trees, and to the top. Easy, 3 miles/500’gain. 10:00 am. Jim & Nancye Ballard, 752-4441, ballardjn@gmail.com

Sat-Tues Sept 13-16 – Fall Creek Backpack. See p. 7

Fri-Sun Sept 19-21 – Lewis River Car Camp. See p. 7

Take to the Water

We have two splendid rafting outings scheduled for this summer.

Sunday, June 29th – Rafting on the McKenzie. A long, fun, splashy day on the beautiful McKenzie River! Paddle raft from Blue River to Helfrich County Park on a class 2-3 run. Great for summer visitors. $50 fee. Pre-registration required. Contact leader: Ray Drapek, 754-7364, drapek@fsl.orst.edu

Sunday, August 10th – Evening Float/Potluck Picnic on the Willamette. Michael’s Landing to Hyak Park while the moon rises. 4:30 to 10:00 pm. We'll raft up and have a snack food picnic along the way. Bring friends and summer guests on this popular activity. $25 fee. Pre-registration required. Contact leader: Christy Stevens at 753-4353.
MPG May-Sept 2008 Backpacks and Camping Trips

This summer we have a variety of backpacks and two camping trips, taking us to a variety of beautiful spots in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Numbers are limited for all of these; preregistration is required. Please talk with the leaders if you have any questions about the nature or difficulty of the trip.

Fri-Mon May 23-26 – Oregon Coast Camping. MPG’s Memorial weekend car-camp is at Sunset Bay State park near Coos Bay, in one of the most scenic areas on the Oregon coast. The park features beautiful sandy beaches protected by towering sea cliffs. We’ll hike at the park as well as inland, to waterfalls in the dense coastal forest. $20 per person. Tom Bucht, 738-1333, TomBucht@gmail.com

Sat-Mon May 31-June 2 – North Fork, Smith River Backpack. Preference given to new or returning backpackers. Pack 3 miles from trailhead near Reedsport through old growth in Smith River Canyon. Day hike 7-10 miles Sunday to one or both of the Kentucky Falls, most spectacular in the Coast Range. Elevation gains are not large; day hike on Sunday may be steep and rugged in places. Easy/moderate. Lelia Barlow, lelia.trips@gmail.com (e-mail preferred); Larry Davis, 503/390-8210. Register by May 14.

Fri-Sun June 20-22 – Indian Heaven Backpack. We’ll do a 10-mile loop past mountain lakes, through subalpine forests and meadows around Bird Mountain in this small Washington wilderness near Mt. Adams. We’ll camp at Cultus and Wood Lakes. Elevation change is 1,700 feet, including 1,100 of gain on the first day. New backpackers welcome. Easy/moderate. Allan King, 503/399-9990, kingalla@gmail.com; Joanne DeMay.

Fri-Sun July 11-13 – Dickey Creek Trail Backpack. See glorious old growth and mountain lakes in this uncrowded corner of the Bull of the Woods Wilderness. We’ll camp part way to Big Slide Lake on the first day, then move to the lake and explore the area on the second, hike all the way out (mostly downhill) on the third. Moderate. David Anderson, 758-7602, DAAMP1@MSN.com

Fri-Thur July 18-24 – Sawtooths Backpack. Backpack 5-7 miles per day for 5 days in Idaho’s beautiful Sawtooth Mountains, camping each night at a mountain lake. Elevations from 7,000’ to 8,330’. Moderate; for experienced backpackers. Bob Custer, 745-3994, laststand@exchangenet.net

Sat-Sun Aug 30-Sept 7 – PCT Backpack V. This backpack continues the trek south on the Pacific Crest Trail, through the Mt. Washington and Three Sisters Wilderness areas. We will hike in a variety of habitats from alpine meadows to Cascade forests and rocky lava fields. Limited participation. Difficult. Ray Drapek, 754-7364, drapek@fsl.orst.edu

Sat-Tues Sept 13-16 – Fall Creek - Broken Top Backpack. Experience woody creeks, high alpine meadows, glaciers and mountain lakes in the Three Sisters Wilderness. We’ll go in at Green Lakes, spend two nights camping and exploring near the base of Broken Top, then return via the Soda Creek Trail. 18 miles and 3000’ elevation gain with packs, plus day hikes. Moderate/difficult. Larry Davis, 503/390-8210, larrydavis@wvi.com ; Lelia Barlow:

Fri-Sun Sept 19-21 – Lewis River Car Camp. We’ll camp among fir trees beside the Lewis River at the Lower Falls group camp. This site, in Southern Washington's Gifford Pinchot National Forest, is rated as a “10” for its scenic location. Hike to falls along the river, to the best viewpoint of Mt. St. Helens, maybe to a cave – see area hikes in Sullivan’s 100 Hikes in NW Oregon. Planned hikes are moderate to difficult; easier trails are available. Bob Custer, 745-3994, laststand@exchangenet.net

Nominations Sought for MPG ExCom

Each year the MPG holds elections for membership to its Executive Committee (ExCom). The MPG is a wonderful and dynamic group to work with. Would you like to serve? There will be three positions contested this fall. If you are interested, please contact either Julie Arrington at 752-6052 or julie.seahorse@gmail.com or Bob Custer at 745-3994 or laststand@exchangenet.net by August 1st. Persons are elected for three-year terms. This is your opportunity to serve the Marys Peak Group.
Views of our Cascade volcanic peaks are immensely inspiring. We see the beauty and purity of these peaks and revere their being sentinels. Frequently we desire closer looks; we want to be in places where we can view them from bottom to top on clear days.

For me, Mt. Jefferson’s towering is a prize. I’ve viewed it from the east, the south, the west and the north. The most awe inspiring and impressive view is from Park Ridge. This is a hike best done from August to mid-October.

Park Ridge, at 6,900 feet, lies on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) to the north, with the sweeping Jefferson Park below and the full view of Mt. Jefferson above. As trails book author Bill Sullivan says, it “fills half the sky.” There are some challenges in getting to Park Ridge, however. One can hike up the Whitewater Trail into Jeff Park and then ascend the steep trail 1,400’, and turn around at Park Ridge for the view. This is a 14-mile roundtrip, and makes for a long day. It is better done as an overnight backpack.

A shorter (7.4 miles roundtrip) and preferable route is from the north on the PCT. Here, however, the challenge is getting to the trailhead, because it involves traveling over very rocky roads to Breitenbush Lake, using only high-clearance vehicles. The better route is from Forest Road 4220, off FR 46 north of Detroit. Check the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness map for route details.

Last August I found myself at the trailhead parking lot at the north end of Breitenbush Lake, ready to go one more time. The trail starts out in a mixed wooded area of Engelmann alpine spruce, subalpine fir and mountain hemlock, and soon passes the message board where I registered for this wilderness hike. Some of the trees are at least 24” in diameter. Huckleberry bushes carpeted the forest floor, and a small seep in an open area sprouted a patch of beautiful blue gentians.

This trail teases the hiker. As I passed along, there were areas of increased openness providing better and better views to the west and north. The open patches of rocky scree areas gave me glimpses of what was to come. Before long, I could see Mt. Hood.

After about three miles, the alpine forest gives way to a beautiful open rocky alpine area. The ground was covered with the
Mary’s Peak group leader Bob Custer

At 70-plus, Bob Custer has been leading great hiking, backpacking and car-camping trips for Marys Peak Group for more than six years, and he shows no signs of slowing down.

Bob grew up on Long Island, New York, in Garden City, where the highest elevation is about 600 feet. As Bob puts it, outdoor entertainment consisted of hanging out at Jones Beach State Park with its 6.5 miles of ocean beach and museums, ball courts, miniature golf, swimming pools and two-mile boardwalk.

In his adult life he has lived in St. Louis, Boston, Michigan, the Philadelphia area, Corvallis and Los Angeles. Of all the places he has been, Corvallis was his pick for retirement.

“I’ve been retired for more than 10 years now,” says Bob. “I worked in the chemical business, and have a BSChem and MBA. I worked with a large chemical company for 25 years, a few years with an Albany, Oregon startup, and then in my own chemical distribution business in LA, which I sold and retired early.”

He says he and his wife chose Corvallis for several reasons: they had family living in the area; they liked the idea of living in a college town; and they felt the area offered many opportunities to enjoy the beautiful outdoors. Oh, and they found a house on Vineyard Mountain with a great view of the valley and the Cascade Mountains.

Bob credits his two sons, Dave and Jon, for his outdoor enthusiasm. When they were young, his sons joined Boy Scouts and Bob soon found himself jumping right in with them. “We lived in Radnor, Pennsylvania at the time,” Bob reminisced. “The boys were only two years apart in age, and I became an assistant scout leader and went with them to camp in places like the Maine High Adventure area.”

As Bob puts it, scouting was a way for him and his sons to get off the flat land and into the mountains. As they hiked and backpacked sections of the Appalachian Trail in Pennsylvania and Maine, Bob soon realized outdoor activities were an excellent fit for his family.

But as the kids got older, he says, they found the East Coast trails less challenging. “We started taking two-week vacations with a few friends in which we would drive non-stop to the Rockies,” said Bob. “We would spend nine to 10 days backpacking into wilderness areas such as Wind River, Wyoming; Popo Agie, Colorado; the Sawtooths in Idaho; High Uintas, Utah; the California Sierras; Pasayten, Washington; and Beartooth, Montana.”

The family took several trips to Europe as well, by way of business trips through Bob’s work. This allowed him to take his sons on bicycle tours from Munich to Nice and to the chateaux of the Loire. They also backpacked across the island of Corsica, which at the time, Bob says, was surprisingly unpopulated, rugged and wild.

With all that, it’s no surprise that his sons grew up to embrace the outdoors. His oldest son, Dave, teaches at MIT, but his avocation is technical rock climbing. Dave also serves as the American Alpine Association’s safety delegate to the UIAA, the International Alpine Association. “He spends more time recreating outdoors than anyone I know,” says Bob.

Bob’s younger son, Jon, just bought six acres in the mountains of Northern New Mexico. His plan is to build a place to escape to in the great outdoors. And Jon’s own two kids, ages six and ten, are getting into the outdoors as well, with Dad taking them camping and hiking.

In 1997, Bob went on a trip with his oldest son and his son’s girlfriend on the Annapurna Trek in Nepal. “It was a fabulous trip seeing some of the world’s highest mountains and experiencing a totally different culture,” says Bob.

And in 2006, he circled the Monte Rosa Massif in Switzerland and Italy with a group of Chemeketans, going from hut to hut, which he describes as a “different but wonderful experience.”

Today, Bob hikes and occasionally backpacks and snowshoes, and recently led a group on a favorite old hike along the Little North Fork of the Santiam River. He also plays tennis on a regular basis.

Bob will lead his next trip for MPG in July. It will be a backpacking trip into the Sawtooth Mountains in Idaho. In September, he’ll lead a car-camping trip to Southern Washington.

Like many of us, Bob says he enjoys sharing the wilderness experience with others. His favorite places to go are any mountainous areas, and he and his wife also enjoy Elderhostel trips.

“The enormous beauty and grandeur of the mountains is worth the effort it takes to get up into the high regions,” says Bob. “There is a sense of freedom when you are backpacking in a remote area where you are far from the normal daily worries.”

— Lori Fluge-Brunker

Breitenbush Lake from page 8

mountain heathers, Phyllodoce and Cassiope, and troops of red paintbrush. The last quarter-mile is clearly open, with switchbacks and large patches of snow, which I took pleasure in glissading down during my descent.

From atop the windy and scraggly tree-lined ridge, the view of Jeff Park with Russell and Sprague Lakes below and Mt. Jefferson reaching for the sky is awesome. What a sight to behold! To the east is the Warm Springs Reservation. To the west, the Cascade ridges ripple across the horizon. This trail is on my list of hikes for every able Oregonian. -- Barry Wulff
Letter to the Benchmark: A Message from Afar

We all know how fortunate we are to live in the beautiful state of Oregon, particularly Corvallis and the Willamette Valley, but it is always nice to have that knowledge reinforced in a fresh way, as seen through the eyes of another.

Many of you will remember Jipyo ("JP") Kim, the visiting professor from South Korea, who joined MPG members on so many of our hikes last year. Having recently returned to his home in Seoul, he writes:

As usual, this morning, I received from you an email delivering information about new outings. Sometimes, I am under the false impression that I could join you for an outing.

Soon, however, I realize that I am far from Oregon across the Pacific Ocean. I miss the mountains in Oregon: valleys and hills, the old trees, winds, and blue sky. I also miss the streets in Corvallis and even the drizzling rain. Above all, I’d like to see the friends who were so kind and giving, especially the Sierra Club members with whom I went out for hiking almost every weekend. Without them, my time in Oregon would have been boring and futile.

Since we came back to Seoul, my family members have suffered from a kind of homesickness. We had to endure some harsh time to overcome the differences between Seoul and Corvallis. Seoul is a city of more than 10 million people, where you can enjoy all the conveniences a man’s ever devised. Corvallis is the home of a little more than 50 thousand people, where you can cherish all the beauties that nature ever offered. The difference is so huge that each of us wonders if we had really lived in Corvallis, Oregon. We still ask ourselves, “Was it real or did we dream it?”

Living in Seoul, a very dynamic and complex city, where everything changes very quickly, we have been busy catching up on things we ignored for the last one year in Corvallis. I had to learn rules and systems newly introduced to the society and school. I had to take care of lots of administrative work accumulated for one year as well as teaching classes.

Now, I can have some leisure to write to you because the fall semester is over and the school enters a winter vacation. In Korea, the winter vacation is longer than the summer vacation.

I still enjoy the poetic description in your emails and picture myself walking with you in the Oregon forest. Anyway, I will never forget the hospitality I received from you and other MPG members. If you have any chance to visit Seoul, please let me know it. I am ready to guide you through the alleys in Seoul as you did for me in Oregon.

Happy New Year! Sincerely, Jipyo Kym, from Seoul, Korea on the eve of a New Year 2008.

MPG Foundation

You can help the Marys Peak Group with its outings program, trail work, and evening programs by donating to the Marys Peak Group foundation. Your tax deductible donations will support our efforts. For information, contact treasurer Steve Ford at 929-6207 or sandsford@aol.com

This is the final paper edition of the Benchmark. Future issues will be produced in PDF (Adobe Acrobat format) and available on line for viewing and downloading. We have taken these steps to eliminate the environmental impacts associated with print editions and because of rising printing and postage costs. These costs are nearing $5,000 for the 7,500 copies we print yearly. We receive less than $2,000 from the Oregon Chapter to cover all our costs.

Our future PDF editions will be available on line at the end of August, December, and April. You may access them by Googling “Marys Peak Group” or typing in http://www.oregon.sierraclub.org/groups/marys_peak/. Those receiving the weekly Marys Peak Group email will be notified when the editions are available. You may be added to this list by request to wulffb@peak.org. Those without a computer can gain access to on-line issues at their library.

If you want a paper edition, we recommend you print copies locally. If you would like to have non-color editions mailed to you, we must ask that you notify Jane Luther (1229 Seaport Circle, Corvallis 97339) of your wish, and accompany your request with a payment of $7.50 for a year’s subscription to cover printing and postage. The calendar year for all subscriptions begins with the January issue. The September 2008 will be considered a part of the 2009 subscription. – Barry Wulff

Editors Note: We have enjoyed editing the Benchmark for the past six years, but it’s now time to share the fun with a new editor. We applaud the ExCom’s decision to produce the newsletter electronically and hope you also will welcome the change. -- Roger and Anne Tracy
Letter to the *Benchmark*: “Think Local” — A Different View

I have a slightly different view of “thinking locally” than is often expressed in the context of saving the planet. I am in favor of using as many locally-produced products as possible, but the concept of thinking locally seems to go beyond the effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save non-renewable resources. That’s where I have a problem, especially with some of the long-term potential consequences.

Humans are always tempted to take a complex grand idea and apply it in a simplistic form that is easy to understand and implement. Doing so often leads to unanticipated consequences. This is what scares me. I worry that if we think too locally, we may begin to turn inward to the extent that we will create a tightly-knit community that will want to impose a common set of beliefs and actions on everyone, and we will lose our individual liberties of thought, speech, and action, even without some overarching government taking them away. The danger is that we could become a bunch of inwardly-focused communities with the “us and them” mentality that leads to fanatical beliefs, and even vicious and deadly conflict. It wouldn’t happen overnight, but the slope is very slippery.

Focusing only on the local community would deny us the richness of knowledge and experience represented by the world’s diversity. It could undermine our sense of belonging to the greater global web of life. The opportunities that I have had to visit, work, and live in many places in the world have made me a better citizen. Without the worldwide transportation system, I would have known only that one region where I was born, and I would be intellectually and culturally poorer for it. We should all walk, bike, and use mass transit whenever we can, but I believe we would lose something very valuable if we just stayed in our own neighborhood and never experienced something of the rest of the world.

We need to find a new way of living the future, one that uses new, less destructive energy sources and doesn’t waste them frivolously, that manages non-renewable resources wisely, and that is more cognizant of our relationship to the other life on the planet. We do not need to revert to some past, more primitive, model just because it used fewer resources. Focusing only on locally-available resources would inevitably bring major scientific research to a halt and sharply curtail the creative arts. Do we really want to become isolated agrarian communities surviving on local resources that are too limited to provide the leisure time and the means for creative endeavors such as art, writing, and investigating the nature of life and the universe around us?

That’s not what we’re talking about, you say? Of course not, at the beginning . . . But consider what happens when people focus just on their own group in support of an idea, or worse yet, an ideology. Think of Shites vs. Sunnis, of Waco, of Jonestown, and of other tightly communal living arrangements gone awry. Think simply of someone writing to the Gazette-Times that everyone out driving late at night is either drunk or a thief. This person thinks that anyone who is different from him should be subject to being stopped by the police! It’s so easy to fall into this trap.

We don’t start out to be mean and exclusive when we have a grand idea. It’s that humans, as a species, are not very good at keeping the big, complex concept in proper perspective and dealing with its complexity. We have a strong tendency to focus on certain simplistic aspects and then apply too much zeal, often with vicious and deadly consequences. Work harder to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, conserve non-renewable resources, and develop alternative energy sources! Just be very careful not to go down the slippery slope of creating a narrow-minded, conformity-imposing society that could make saving the planet the least of your personal worries — Marcia Shapiro

Note: A slightly different version of this article appeared in the “AS I SEE IT” section of the January 8, 2008 Corvallis Gazette-Times.

February Wilderness First Aid Training Participants

*Sierra Club Outings: “Safe, Happy, and Inspired”*

Standing: Leslie Hogan and Steve Ford. Up front: Loretta Rivard, Jane Luther, and Larry Davis.