

## **EDITORIAL**

### **The News-Review**

July 27, 2003

#### **Columbian deer recovery a feat worth cheering**

Last week's comeback story wasn't about a politician or a baseball player. It was a tale of a four-legged animal that's seen some hard times in the Northwest. But a brighter future is ahead for the Columbian white-tailed deer.

The local population was officially removed from the Endangered Species list Thursday, in a ceremony at the Bureau of Land Management's North Bank Habitat Management Area.

Too often, endangered species news is grim, reporting extinctions and species irrevocably lost from the world. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site lists more than 500 species of animals as threatened or endangered. Thirty-five animals are listed in Oregon alone. But the Columbian white-tailed deer is shaping up to have an amazing recovery, and cause for locals involved in the effort to cheer.

Take a look at the numbers: In 1940, the government estimated only 200 to 300 deer remained in Douglas County, one of the last remaining enclaves. Today, there are more than 6,000. The white-tailed deer is still endangered in other areas, including in the Columbia River area. Hopefully now some of our county's plentiful deer can be safely relocated to help build up populations in other areas.

The deer have an historic tie to the Northwest. They were one of the species first documented by the Lewis and Clark expedition 200 years ago. In 1967, the deer became one of the first species listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

It took more than 36 years of hard work by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management, with support by many other individuals and organizations, to get to this point. While it'll be a relief for many not to have to worry about following tough Endangered Species Act requirements when dealing with the deer, it's also important to remember that the gains made could easily be reversed. "Our goal is to not let them revert back to the Endangered Species Act," Steve Denney, South west regional manager for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said Thursday. "We never want that to happen again."

Nobody should. Man has the power to ensure that animals prosper or suffer. It's a responsibility that shouldn't be taken lightly. The deer's recovery is an accomplishment all the agencies involved in the recovery can be proud of. It holds out hope that other endangered species in the area can recover, and continue to showcase that man and nature can live together.