

# Vernonia Community Indicators of Vitality

## 2013 Baseline Assessment Summary

### A Product of the Vital Vernonia Indicator Project

A collaboration of:

Vernonia Prevention Coalition, City of Vernonia, Vernonia School District,  
The Ford Family Foundation, Rural Development Initiatives, Vernonia residents, and  
Oregon State University Extension Service & Rural Studies Program

Vital communities are those in which residents work together to achieve a balance of positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes. As rural communities face various economic, ecological, and demographic changes it is important that they pay close attention to their vitality. The Vital Vernonia Indicator Project is an effort aimed at exploring community vitality in Vernonia, particularly in light of recent catastrophic floods and subsequent rebuilding and community development initiatives.

Each section of this report sets forth a series of goals that describes where Vernonia would like to be in the future. Following each goal are numeric indicators of those goals. These indicators can be used to monitor progress toward achieving the community goals and to assess the effectiveness and impact of community actions and investments. The indicators, tracked over time, will reveal to residents, agencies, organizations, officials, and other decision-makers whether Vernonia is making progress towards the goal of a vital rural community.

This document is a summary of the 2013 Vernonia Indicator Report. For the full report, please contact the City of Vernonia or Oregon State University Extension Service, Columbia County.

Use this document to:

- Improve your understanding of Vernonia's community priorities
- Identify areas of community vitality as well as areas in need of attention
- Promote programs or actions that address these priority issues.

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Oregon State University Extension Service

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## Acknowledgements

The Vital Vernonia Indicator Project is a collaboration of Oregon State University Extension Service and the community of Vernonia. The Vernonia Prevention Coalition was our community sponsoring organization.

The following community members served on the Vital Vernonia Indicator Project steering committee, dedicating many hours of their time and expertise. The project would not have been possible without them.

Bill Haack  
Jack Harvey  
Scott Laird  
Bill Langmaid  
DeAnna Pearl  
Donna Webb  
Nicholas Welch

These additional community members contributed their knowledge, data and assistance in collecting information about the indicators.







Sharon Bernal  
Byron Brown  
Dan Brown  
Joann Glass  
Aaron Miller  
Maggie Peyton

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Special thanks to Lena Etuk, Oregon State University Extension Service, and Shawn Morford, Rural Development Initiatives, for lending their expertise with community indicator projects; and to Amy Carlson, Nonprofit Association of Oregon, for facilitating outreach about the project.

## Key to symbols

Several symbols are used in this report with respect to indicator targets.



	Target is being met			Target is not being met
	Trend is improving			Trend is declining
	Baseline assessment; target/trend cannot be determined			

## A. LIVABILITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Goal: Vernonia is a family-friendly community.

<b>1. Youth participation</b>	<b>375 youth</b> participate in Booster sports clubs in Vernonia and <b>213 tickets</b> were sold for children's events at the Vernonia Salmon Festival.	?
		<b>Target</b> > 375 and 213



*Source: Vernonia Boosters and Vernonia Salmon Festival, 2013*

<b>2. Families with children</b>	<b>40% of households within Vernonia's census tract have children under 18.</b>	 
	<p style="text-align: center;">—■— Vernonia —▲— rural Oregon</p>	<b>Target</b> ≥ 36% (average across rural Oregon)

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, 2010*




### Goal: Vernonia schools are supported with a robust enrollment.

<b>3. School Enrollment</b>	<b>568 students</b> are enrolled in Vernonia School District.	 
		<b>Target</b> Increase by 2% per year (615 by 2015)

*Source: Vernonia School District*

## A. LIVABILITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT


**Goal: Vernonia has sufficient and well-maintained parks and greenspaces.**

<b>4. Parks acreage and budget</b>	City of Vernonia has <b>78 acres of parks per 1,000</b> residents and spends <b>\$40</b> per capita on parks operations annually.	
		<b>Target</b> Within range of other small cities

*Source: City of Vernonia, FY 2008-09 through 2012-13*




**Goal: Vernonia is a desirable place to live.**


<b>5. Population</b>	The population of Vernonia's census tract was estimated to be <b>3,656</b> in the 2007-11 time period, and <b>fell 4%</b> between 2006-10 and 2007-11.	
		<b>Target</b> Grow ~1%/year

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-11*

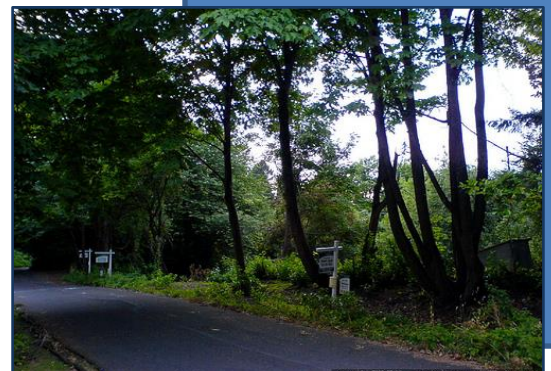


<b>6. Migration</b>	<b>19%</b> of adult residents in Vernonia grew up here, left, and then returned by choice to live here as an adult	
		<b>Target</b> Maintain or increase

*Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project Household Survey, 2013*

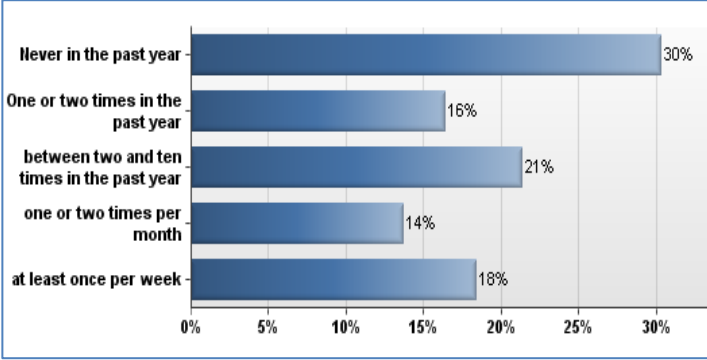

<b>7. Real estate market</b>	Residential properties in Vernonia were listed on the market for an average <b>104 days</b> before sale.	
		<b>Target</b> ≤ Columbia County average (150 days)

*Source: RMLS Multiple Listing Service, 2012*




## A. LIVABILITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Goal: Residents participate in community life.**

<b>8. Adult volunteerism</b>	<p><b>“Over the past year, how often have you volunteered in the community?”</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Frequency</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Never in the past year</td> <td>30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>One or two times in the past year</td> <td>16%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>between two and ten times in the past year</td> <td>21%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>one or two times per month</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>at least once per week</td> <td>18%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Frequency	Percentage	Never in the past year	30%	One or two times in the past year	16%	between two and ten times in the past year	21%	one or two times per month	14%	at least once per week	18%	 <b>Target</b> >75% volunteer between 1 or 2x/year and 1 or 2x/month (i.e., <25% never volunteer or volunteer more than 1x/week)
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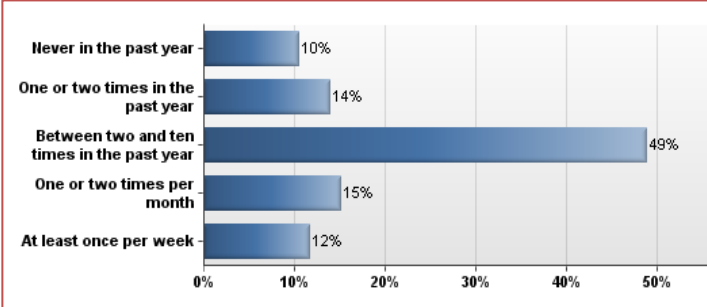

*Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project Household Survey, 2013*

<b>9. Civic participation</b>	<p><b>44%</b> of Vernonia adult residents report having attended a community meeting, town hall, or city- or school district-sponsored meeting in the past year</p>	 <b>Target</b> > 44%
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*Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project Household Survey, 2013*

## B. YOUTH AND EDUCATION


**Goal: Opportunities for pro-social involvement exist for youth.**

<b>10. Youth volunteerism</b>	<p><b>“Over the past year, how often have you volunteered in the community?” (other than for a class or graduation requirement)</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Frequency</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Never in the past year</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>One or two times in the past year</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Between two and ten times in the past year</td> <td>49%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>One or two times per month</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>At least once per week</td> <td>12%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Frequency	Percentage	Never in the past year	10%	One or two times in the past year	14%	Between two and ten times in the past year	49%	One or two times per month	15%	At least once per week	12%	 <b>Target</b> >75% volunteer between 1 or 2x/year and 1 or 2x/month (i.e., <25% never volunteer or volunteer more than 1x/week)
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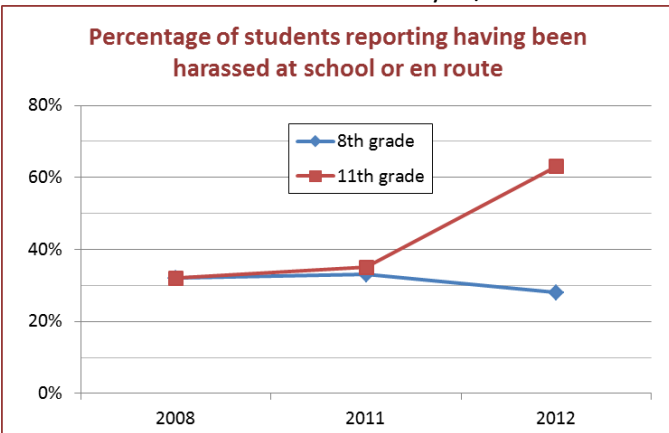
*Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project VHS Student Survey, 2013*

## B. YOUTH AND EDUCATION

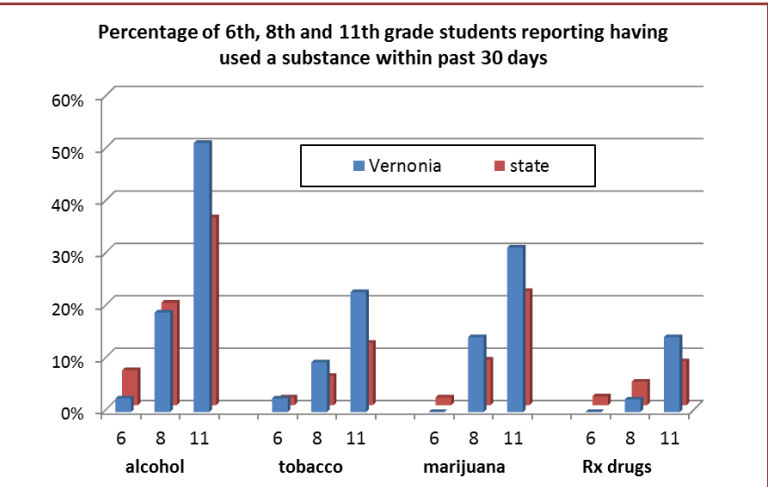

### Goal: Youth exhibit traits of positive social development.

<b>11. Positive youth development</b>	<b>69% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 63% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders in Vernonia</b> report strong levels of individual health and confidence, adult support at school and helping others in the community (Positive Youth Development Benchmark)	
		<b>Target</b> ≥ statewide average (60% 8 <sup>th</sup> and 66% 11 <sup>th</sup> )

*Source: Oregon Student Wellness Survey, 2012*

<b>12. Bullying</b>	<b>28% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 63% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders</b> report being harassed at school or on their way to/from school.	
	<b>Percentage of students reporting having been harassed at school or en route</b> 	<b>Target</b> ≤ statewide average (51% 8 <sup>th</sup> and 40% 11 <sup>th</sup> in 2012)


*Source: DeAnna Pearl, Oregon Healthy Teens Survey 2011*

<b>13. Teen substance abuse</b>	<b>Percentage of teens reporting alcohol or drug use</b> <b>Percentage of 6th, 8th and 11th grade students reporting having used a substance within past 30 days</b> 	
		<b>Target</b> ≤ statewide average

*Source: Oregon Student Wellness Survey, 2012*


## B. YOUTH AND EDUCATION

**Goal: Youth exhibit bonding and attachment to their school and community.**


<b>14. Youth perception of their community</b>	74% of VHS students say they take pride in their school and community.	
		<b>Target</b> ≥ 72%

*Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project VHS Student Survey, 2013*


**Goal: Students in Vernonia are academically successful.**

<b>15. High school graduation rate</b>	The 4-year cohort graduation rate at Vernonia High School is <b>70%</b> .	
		<b>Target</b> increase

*Source: Vernonia School District, 2013*

<b>16. Youth aspirations</b>	86% of VHS students say they intend to pursue higher education (including trade or vocational programs).	
		<b>Target</b> ≥ national average (90% in 2011)

*Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project VHS Student Survey, 2013*

<b>17. College scholarships</b>	\$48,000 in college scholarships were awarded to VHS graduating seniors in one year.	
		<b>Target</b> ≥ \$48,000

*Source: Vernonia School District, 2012-13*



## C. ECONOMY

**Goal: Vernonia has a viable commercial downtown center.**

<b>18. Downtown core</b>	81% of downtown storefronts are occupied.	?
		<b>Target</b> increase

*Source: Scott Laird, 2013*



**Goal: Tourism and recreation contribute to Vernonia's economy.**

<b>19. Overnight lodging</b>	There are <b>9</b> of rooms of overnight lodging available in Vernonia and average <b>43%</b> vacancy rate ( <b>33% in July</b> and <b>53% in November</b> ).	?
		<b>Target</b> TBD (see full report)

*Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project Business Survey, 2013*

<b>20. Seasonal recreation</b>	City parks have an average <b>33%</b> vacancy rate in July and August.	?
		<b>Target</b> <33% but >15%
	Number of cyclists that use the Banks-Vernonia Trail per year (Data not currently available)	?
	<b>\$11,300</b> per year is collected in day-use fees at Vernonia city parks.	?
		<b>Target</b> >\$11,300

*Source: City of Vernonia, 2010-12*



## C. ECONOMY

**Goal: Agriculture and natural resources contribute to Vernonia's economy.**

<b>21. Natural resources economic sector</b>	There are <b>12</b> businesses that produce value-added forest products. <sup>1</sup>	? <b>Target</b> >12
	<b>27%</b> of households report that some of the total household income comes from natural resources related activity or services <sup>2</sup>	✔ <b>Target</b> Maintain within 5% (22-32%)

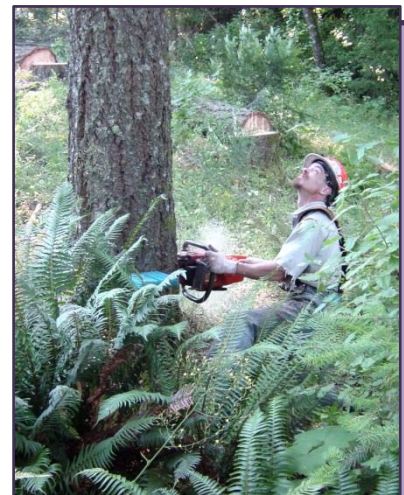
*Source: <sup>1</sup>Vital Vernonia Indicator Project Business Survey, <sup>2</sup>Vital Vernonia Indicator Project Household Survey, 2013*

<b>22. Restoration economy</b>	<b>\$2.64 million</b> has been invested in stream restoration projects in the Upper Nehalem watershed in the past five years.	? <b>Target</b> Increase
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*Source: Oregon Water Resources Inventory (via Oregon Explorer Watershed Restoration Tool), 2007-11*

<b>23. Agriculture economic sector</b>	There are <b>12</b> businesses that produce value-added farm products.	? <b>Target</b> increase
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*Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project Business Survey, 2013*



**Goal: Vernonia has the capacity for commercial activity and it is utilized.**



<b>24. Commercial capacity</b>	<b>93%</b> of commercially zoned acreage is used/developed.	? <b>Target</b> 93 – 95%
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*Source: City of Vernonia GIS, 2013*




## C. ECONOMY

### Goal: Local employment is available.



<b>25. Local employment</b>	There are <b>267</b> people employed by Vernonia businesses. <sup>1</sup>	
		<b>Target</b> >267
	30% of commuters in the Vernonia census tract travel less than 30 minutes to work. <sup>2</sup>	
		<b>Target</b> ≥ rural Oregon (69%)

Source: <sup>1</sup>Vital Vernonia Indicator Project Business Survey, 2013, <sup>2</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-11


<b>26. Youth employment</b>	19% of teens at Vernonia High School have a job within 20 miles of Vernonia.	
		<b>Target</b> increase

Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project VHS Student Survey, 2013

### Goal: Vernonia's residents are economically secure.

<b>27. Poverty</b>	The poverty rate in the census tract is <b>7.2%</b> . <sup>1</sup>	
		<b>Target</b> ≤ rural Oregon (13%)
	44% of students in VSD qualify for free or reduced lunch. <sup>2</sup>	
		<b>Target</b> ≤ rural Oregon (59%)

Source: <sup>1</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-11, <sup>2</sup>Vernonia School District, 2011-12

<b>28. Employment</b>	The unemployment rate in the census tract is <b>8.1%</b> ( <b>± 1.3%</b> ).	
		<b>Target</b> ≤ rural Oregon (9.8%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-11

## D. HEALTH AND WELL BEING

### Goal: Residents have access to the health care services they need.

<b>29. Health care availability</b>	There are <b>5</b> health care service providers located in Vernonia. <sup>1</sup>	<b>✗</b> <b>Target</b> increase
	There are <b>44 provider-hours</b> per week of primary care available in Vernonia. <sup>2</sup>	<b>✗</b> <b>Target</b> increase

*Source: <sup>1</sup>Oregon Secretary of State Business License Directory & VVIP Advisory Committee, 2013; <sup>2</sup>as of April 2013*

<b>30. Health care access</b>	55% of Vernonia adults say they have access to the health care services they need.	<b>?</b> <b>Target</b> >55%
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*Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project Household Survey, 2013*


### Goal: Food security is not a concern in Vernonia.

<b>31. Food security</b>	144 households obtain emergency food boxes from the Vernonia Cares Food Bank per month.	<b>?</b> <b>Target</b> decrease									
	<p style="text-align: center;">4% of Vernonia adults report frequent concerns about obtaining food.  <b>“In the past year, did you ever have to worry about where your next meal would come from?”</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <caption>Food Security Concerns Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Frequency</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td>81%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rarely</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Often</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Always</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Frequency	Percentage	Never	81%	Rarely	14%	Often	4%	Always	0%
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*Source: Vernonia Cares Food Bank, 2012; Vital Vernonia Indicator Project Household Survey, 2013*

## D. HEALTH AND WELL BEING

### Goal: Residents have healthful and active lifestyles.


<b>32. Healthy lifestyle (adults)</b>	<b>81%</b> of Vernonia adults say they exercise regularly (at least once per week).	
		<b>Target</b> maintain or increase

*Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project Household Survey, 2013*

<b>33. Healthy lifestyle (youth)</b>	Percentage of VSD students who walk or bike to school	
	Percentage of VSD students who are overweight or obese	
	Data for these measures are not currently available.	




### Goal: Elderly residents have access to the services they need.

<b>34. Elderly services</b>	There are <b>4 types of social services targeted to seniors</b> available in Vernonia.	
		<b>Target</b> > 4

*Source: Jack Harvey, 2013*

## E. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

### Goal: Vernonia is a flood-resilient community.

<b>35. Resilience of structures in the floodplain</b>	<b>83%</b> of buildings that were deemed out of compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) have subsequently been brought into compliance.	
		<b>Target</b> 100%

*Source: City of Vernonia (personal communication), 2013*

## E. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

<b>36. Green infrastructure</b>	<b>7 acres</b> of instream, wetland, or side channels restoration projects intended to promote natural basin storage have been completed in the Upper Nehalem Basin.	
		<b>Target</b> Add 3 acres/year

*Source: Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (personal communication), 2013*

**Goal: The Vernonia Natural Resources Education Program is successfully contributing to positive environmental and educational outcomes.**

<b>37. Natural Resources Education Program capacity</b>	The Vernonia School District has secured <b>\$133,900 in grants and 9 partners providing in-kind support</b> for youth natural resources education.	
		<b>Target</b> Maintain # of partners Increase total funding
	<b>100%</b> of VSD teachers are doing service-learning or project-based learning related to natural resources.	
		<b>Target</b> 100%

*Source: Vernonia School District, 2013*

<b>38. Youth interest in natural resources</b>	<p><b>41%</b> of VHS students say they are interested in pursuing natural resources-related internships, jobs, or higher education.</p> <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Interest Level</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Possibly or Definitely</td> <td>41%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Probably Not or Definitely Not</td> <td>59%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Interest Level	Percentage	Possibly or Definitely	41%	Probably Not or Definitely Not	59%	
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Possibly or Definitely	41%							
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		<b>Target</b> Maintain or increase						

*Source: Vital Vernonia Indicator Project VHS Student Survey, 2013*



## E. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**Goal: Youth have an environmental awareness and connection to their natural environment.**

<b>39. Youth outdoor recreation</b>	<b>113</b> Vernonia youth have hunting or fishing licenses.	?
		<b>Target</b> Maintain or increase

*Source: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2012*

**Goal: The Upper Nehalem Watershed supports a healthy salmon population.**

<b>40. Stream restoration</b>	<b>3</b> restoration prescriptions that have been identified for the Rock Creek basin have been implemented and maintained (if applicable) at least three years.	?
		<b>Target</b> Add 1 project per 3 years

*Source: Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (personal communication), 2013*

<b>41. Stream temperature</b>	<b>70%</b> of monitoring stations in the Upper Nehalem watershed had a 7-day average of daily maximum temperature exceeding the temperature standard for fish health (65 F). This temperature threshold was exceeded on <b>78 days</b> out of the year.	?
		<b>Target</b> <70% of stations and <78 days

*Source: Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, 2000*

<b>42. Salmon abundance</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">There are an estimated <b>160,000 to 248,000 juvenile Coho</b> in Rock Creek basin.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <caption>Salmon Abundance Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Abundance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2009</td> <td>235,278</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2010</td> <td>160,752</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2011</td> <td>248,400</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Year	Abundance	2009	235,278	2010	160,752	2011	248,400	?
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		<b>Target</b> increase								

*Source: Upper Nehalem Watershed Council, 2009-11*

E. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**Goal: Private forestlands in the Upper Nehalem watershed are healthy and productive.**

<b>43. Forest certification</b>	There are <b>33 family forest owners, owning 10,534 acres</b> whose lands are certified (land in eastern half of watershed, Columbia & Washington Counties).	?
		<b>Target</b> Increase by 5%/5 years

*Source: Oregon Tree Farm System, Northwest Natural Resources Group, Trout Mountain Forestry, 2013*

<b>44. Forestland conversion</b>	95.2% of land in the Upper Nehalem watershed is classified as "Wildland Forest" land use.	
		<b>Target</b> No net loss

*Source: Oregon Department of Forestry, 2009*



## List of acronyms

FEMA = Federal Emergency Management Agency  
GIS = Geographic Information System  
NFIP = National Flood Insurance Program  
NRCS = Natural Resources Conservation Service  
ODF = Oregon Department of Forestry  
OSU = Oregon State University  
PAG = Physical Activity Guidelines  
PYD = Positive Youth Development  
RDI = Rural Development Initiatives  
RMLS = Regional Multiple Listing Service  
UNWC = Upper Nehalem Watershed Council  
USDA = United States Department of Agriculture  
VSD = Vernonia School District  
VHS = Vernonia High School  
VVIP = Vital Vernonia Indicator Project