

Fifth graders give back to nature with fry they carefully nurtured for weeks. Several fifth graders from Allen Dale Elementary School in Grants Pass took a break from their holiday break Wednesday to do what is essentially some reverse fishing. For approximately a month, the students have been caring for salmon eggs provided by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife as part of a project on the environment and salmon biology. The goal was to release the salmon fry into the Rogue River. The students gathered

Local students give salmon a tiny boost



Photos by BEA AHBECK/Daily Courier
Olive Elseth, 10, releases the fry she has been caring for over the past few weeks as part of a fifth grade class project at Allen Dale Elementary School. The students gathered at the Schroeder Park boat ramp on Wednesday and sent the tiny fish on their way.

on the boat ramp at Schroeder Park, where fifth grade teacher Kim de Young put some of the fry in a cup of water. The students then dipped the cup in the water and allowed the tiny fish to enter the

river at its own pace. "We want to just remind the kids that we're working with nature and to be gentle with it," de Young said. She added that she made sure to keep their school fish tank at the same temperature as the river, so the fish didn't need the same adjustment period that fish from a pet store would. "It's a pretty clean environment for them, so there aren't really any particulates or anything in there; it's pretty sterile," she said, adding that the conditions of the river would help the fish imprint on the area so they return to spawn. "Once they're released and start eating, that's where they imprint. So we want to have the tank as sterile as we can." Fifth grader Olive Elseth said she thought the project was fun. She said "it's crazy" that



Salmon fry wait to be released Wednesday.

they got to watch the eggs develop and hatch, and recalled how watching the eggs and monitoring the water's temperature and quality became part of her daily routine. Christina Elseth, Olive's mother, said it was a great hands-on experience for the students. She recalled they also monitored how many eggs there were each day, as well as

keeping a feeding schedule — the project also incorporated every subject from art to math and writing. The students were involved in every step of caring for the eggs, she said, adding, "They've been with the salmon a long time." De Young said she tried to arrange for the release to happen after students returned from the holiday break, so the entire class could participate. But the late delivery of this year's eggs meant the timing didn't work out, even when she tried adjusting the tank's temperature to try to accelerate, then slow, the fry's development. "It just wasn't going to happen. ... You can play a little bit with biology, but not too much," she said. De Young said the goal of the project was to give the students a practical, tangible connection to the environment and demonstrate how everything is connected. Focusing the lessons around something students can see in their hometown adds another level of appreciation to what's being learned.

"The hope," she said, "is that the kids are connected to their environment and understand that we live in a very special place." —

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Salmon fry swim into the Rogue River as Allen Dale Elementary fifth graders release them on Wednesday at Schroeder Park.