

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2010

Science! / City Hall UPDATED: Feel Like Checking Out a Giant Sewer Pipe? Read On.

POSTED BY DENIS C. THERIAULT ON WED, OCT 20, 2010 AT 2:59 PM



• MOTOYA NAKAMURA—THE OREGONIAN

- Coming soon: Poop and rainwater.

UPDATE, 2:45 PM: Linc Mann, the Bureau of Environmental Services' excellently named media guy, just called back with deets about when and how the masses will be invited to tour the sewers. The big day is Friday, November 5, and spots will be allocated via a drawing. The bureau is planning to run an ad in the *Oregonian* in the next few days that's meant to be clipped out, filled in and mailed back to the city. A URL also will be included, for those of us who dig the modern world. Names will be pulled from a hat.

The original post picks up here:

So how do you manage, if you're the city council, to keep the public interested in something they'd rather not think about, something like a 20-year overhaul of their sewers? ANSWER! You offer tours of one of its signature elements—a giant tunnel along

the East Side that will keep the Willamette, on all but the rainiest days, from turning into a roiling river of our shit.

Officials are ready to celebrate its completion next year. Except that no one really knows the "milestone" is coming. The public relations problem, as explained by Dean Marriott, the city's environmental services director? "So much of it has been underground." And, so, details about "coupons" for the tour will soon be forthcoming, he says.

The **longtime wastewater project** was a big topic at this morning's city council meeting. By late next year, with all remaining outflow points into the Willamette improved, and the East Side tunnel joining one already up and running on the West Side, poop in the river should drop to fewer than 1 billion gallons a year, well down from its high of 6 billion gallons.

Marriott said that already, after 19 years of progress, water quality in the Willamette is "better than at any time in the last century." Added Commissioner Dan Saltzman: "People still think the water is extremely contaminated with sewage. We're not saying there's no sewage, but we've reduced it. Sometimes it takes a long time to get the word out."

Consider this part of the word. And while we think tours are a good start, what about a swimming excursion. Who's first in? Dan? Anyone?