

## RiverScape Mural Project @ Gregory Heights MS

*"The artistic quality of the mural is a surprise and awe inspiring!" everyone who sees it.*

**Project description and progress:** RiverScape Mural Project at Gregory Heights MS is almost complete. The mural now extends from Oregon City/Willamette Falls to the University of Pacific. Work on the downtown portion is taking rather longer than earlier sections. Coming down the stairs into downtown is humbling. So many windows looking at you, one realizes even though you are physically alone in the hallway or in your car, there are many, many people that could be looking at you from those windows. The artist-in-residence still says it will be completed by June 15, 2001.

**Challenges:** The sheer number of hours involved in painting, 800 student artists, the many different scenes along the river to choose from, the curves and encumbrances on the walls of our building, 800 student artists, all the different personalities and teaching styles of teachers, cleaning all those brushes, 800 student artists, noisy lunch lines, noisy passing times, 800 student artists (did I mention 800 student artists who aren't really artists) are the greatest challenge and mostly to the artist-in-residence, Wendy Dunder. The challenge for me as project leader is to get the district to pay her and to have someone working out of my room for two years. I am totally humbled by the grace, strength, talent, and understanding of human nature of this artist. Yes, I worship her and totally recommend her for an Academy Award of doing art with children!

Besides the actual mural, is the educational value of the project. I have learned a great deal about the river and the potential for using community resources for teaching from this project. The frustration comes from being too tired to use it. I'm expecting to have at least another year to develop this potential within my own classroom and help others in theirs. Through a grant from the Portland Schools Foundation I have developed three curriculum pieces to publish on the Mural web site. I have a host of other possible uses for the mural in classrooms within our school and for field trips for feeder elementary students. One parks department guide has suggested starting kayak trips at the mural to discuss the larger picture of the watershed. One thing I want to do right away is to graph a comparison of the length in feet of built-up verses green riparian shoreline along the mural.

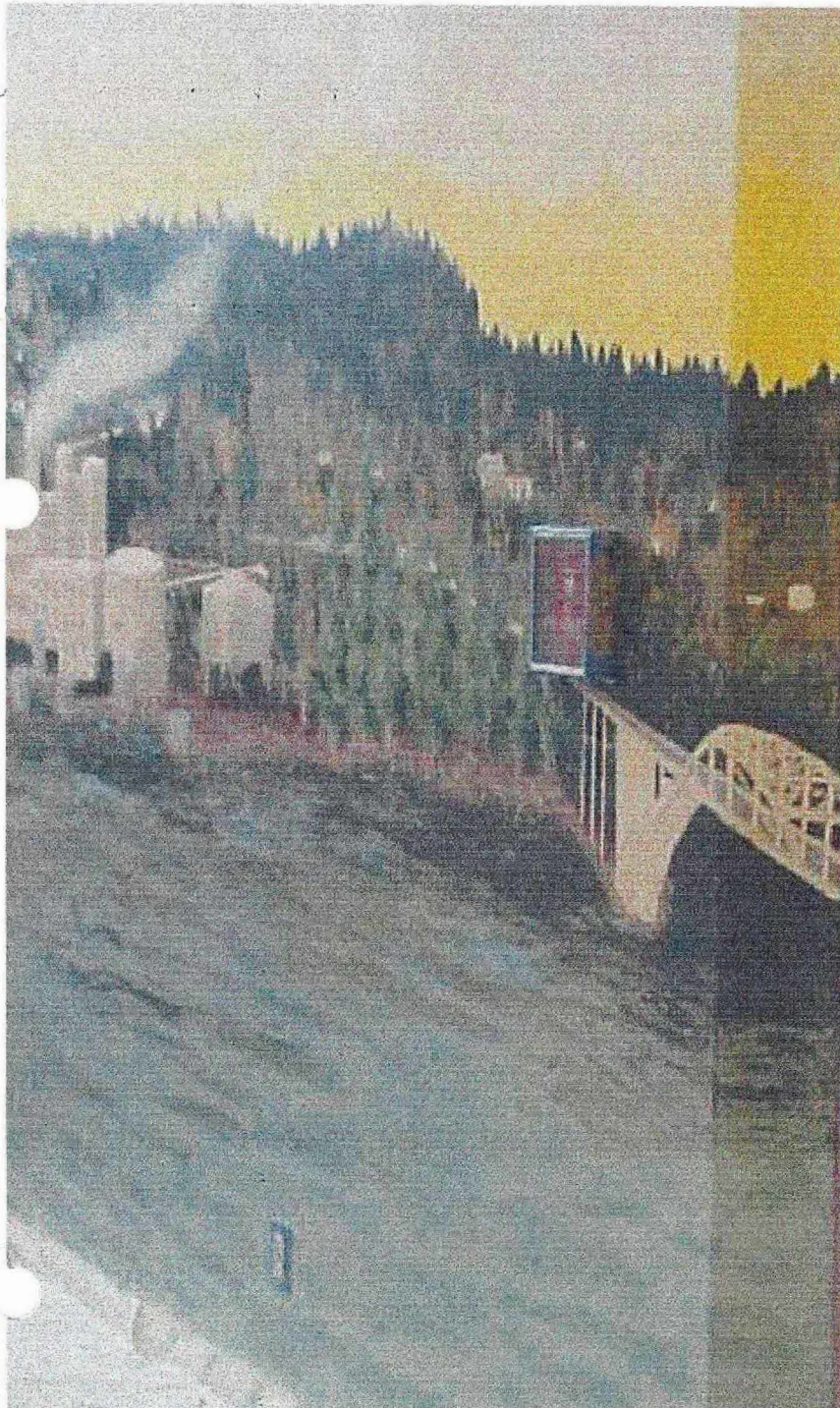
**Solutions:** The real unmet challenge of this project was parent involvement. We have had two handfuls of people helping out extensively for long periods of time. But not really parents. By putting the word out in AmeriCorps circles and in Synergy we got young people volunteering who wanted experience with kids/art/environmentalism. But parents only wanted to go on field trips on the H<sub>2</sub>O boat (all 800 kids went out with H<sub>2</sub>O). They did this unflinching. Good for them, too. Most of them (excepting the fishermen and women) learned a thing or two about their city and it's river! There seems to be a vast untapped hoard of idealistic, energetic young peoples (20-28years old) out there that loves to volunteer. So I am hopeful for the future. But the set of kids/parents we have now is way too involved in sports, work and/or their hectic lives to volunteer to help kids paint. This has been our only real problem. Teacher stress over what they have to cover, so they can't integrate the river or the city has been a disappointment. But I'm not giving up. I bring up the possibilities whenever I can.

**Next steps and future plans:** Next step is to put curriculum on the web, use it and plant natives around the school. I started this year with Friends of Trees, Solv and Diack Foundation to develop the schoolyard potential for filling in the Urban Forest and under-story. We also have a BES project to Naturescape a local storm-water detention pond. The golf course pond is also being studied as a natural area.

**Project activity dates:** Open House and Celebration May 22, 2001 to coincide with the school's portfolio night. We will be painting (frantically) until school is out for the summer! So come see the action. Matter of fact, give yourself a gift and come paint for a day, a week, however long you can.



# Willamette Falls to the Confluence with the Columbia





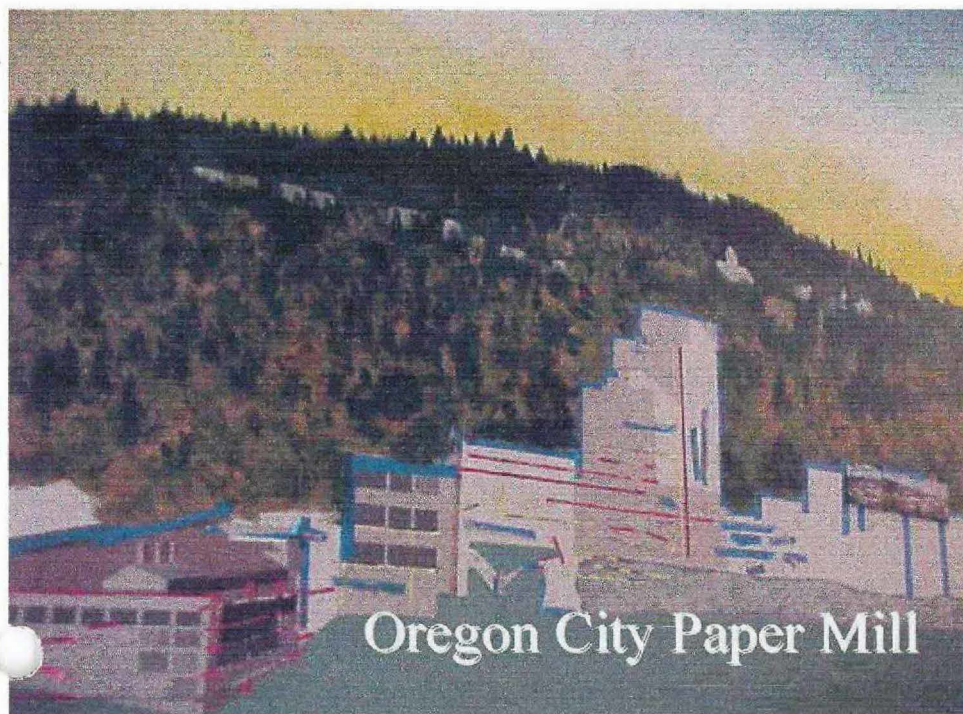


What's going on out here?





Artist and Student Painting...



Oregon City Paper Mill



### Project Goals:

- Getting to know our watershed
- Having all 800 students involved
- Exploring with H2) on the Willamette
- Students doing Independent projects of native species, and river history and issues.
- Teachers using Livable Community Curriculum
- Willamette River Shores on the Halls for studying geography.



Human/environmental interaction

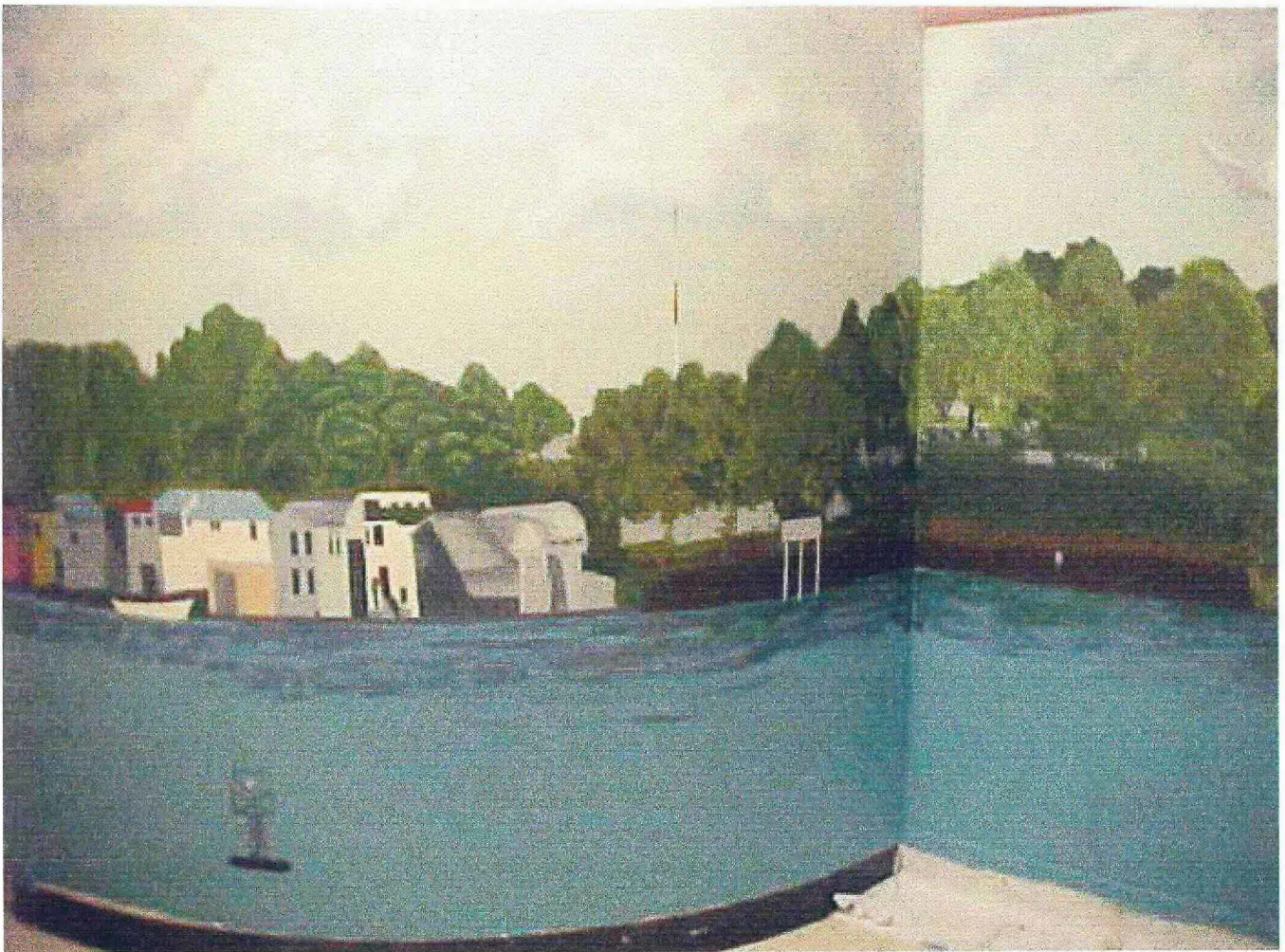




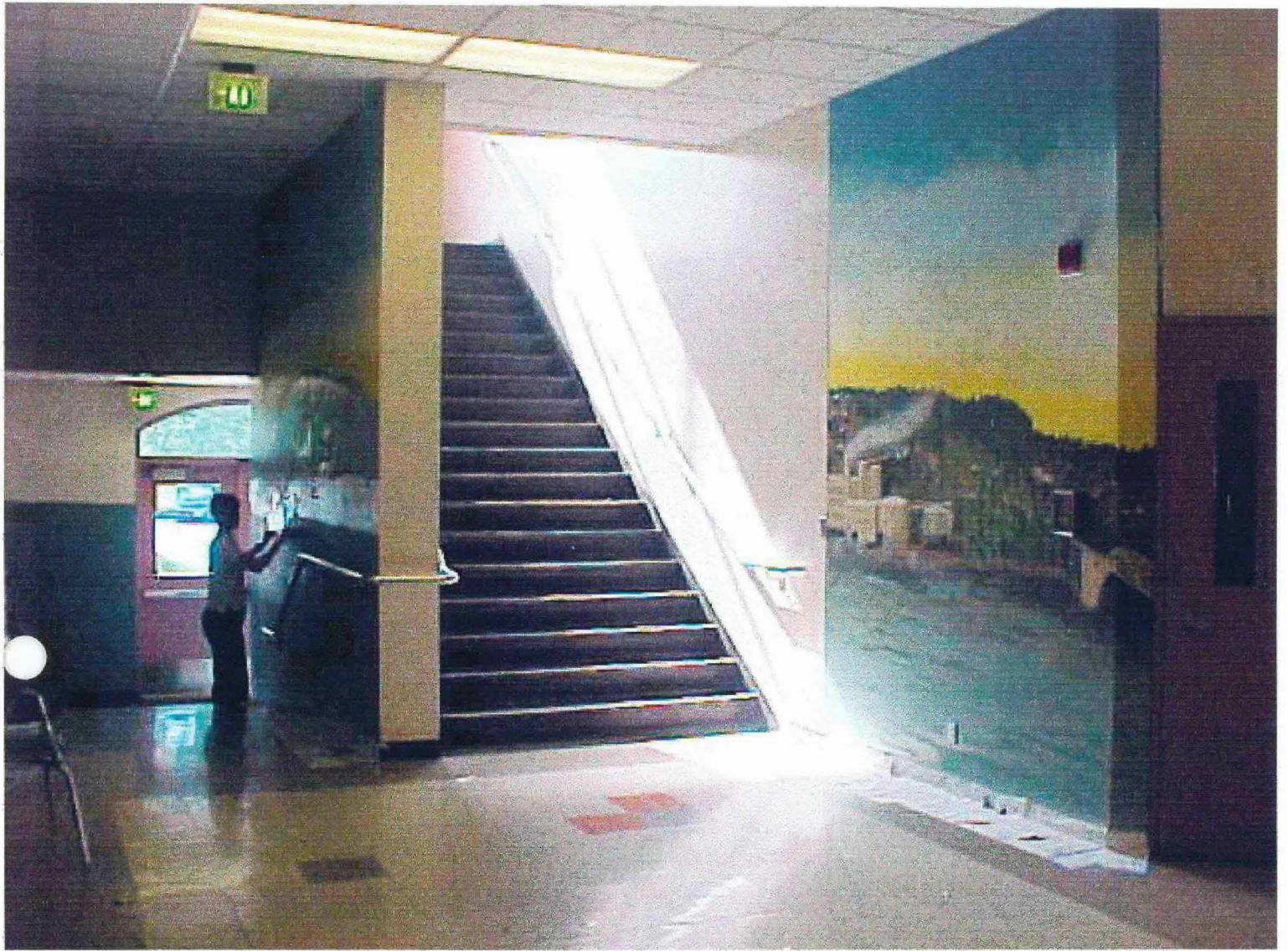
It's a big job.



## Boat houses near Ross Island



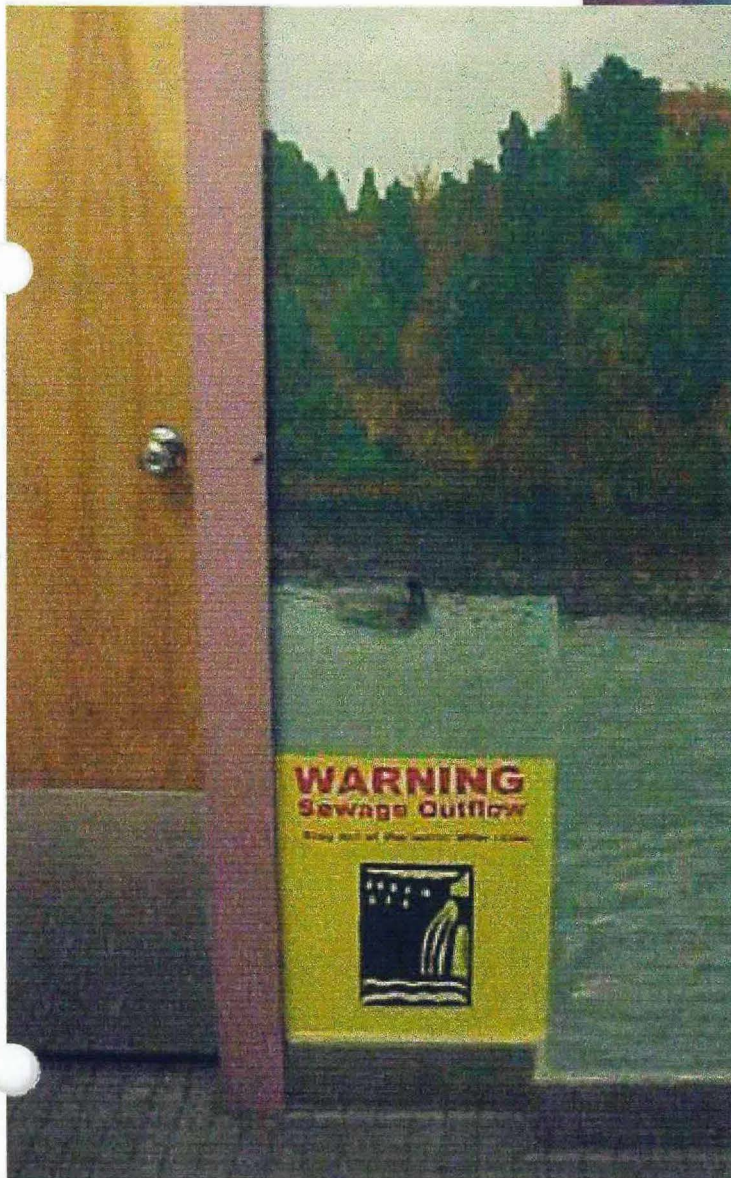
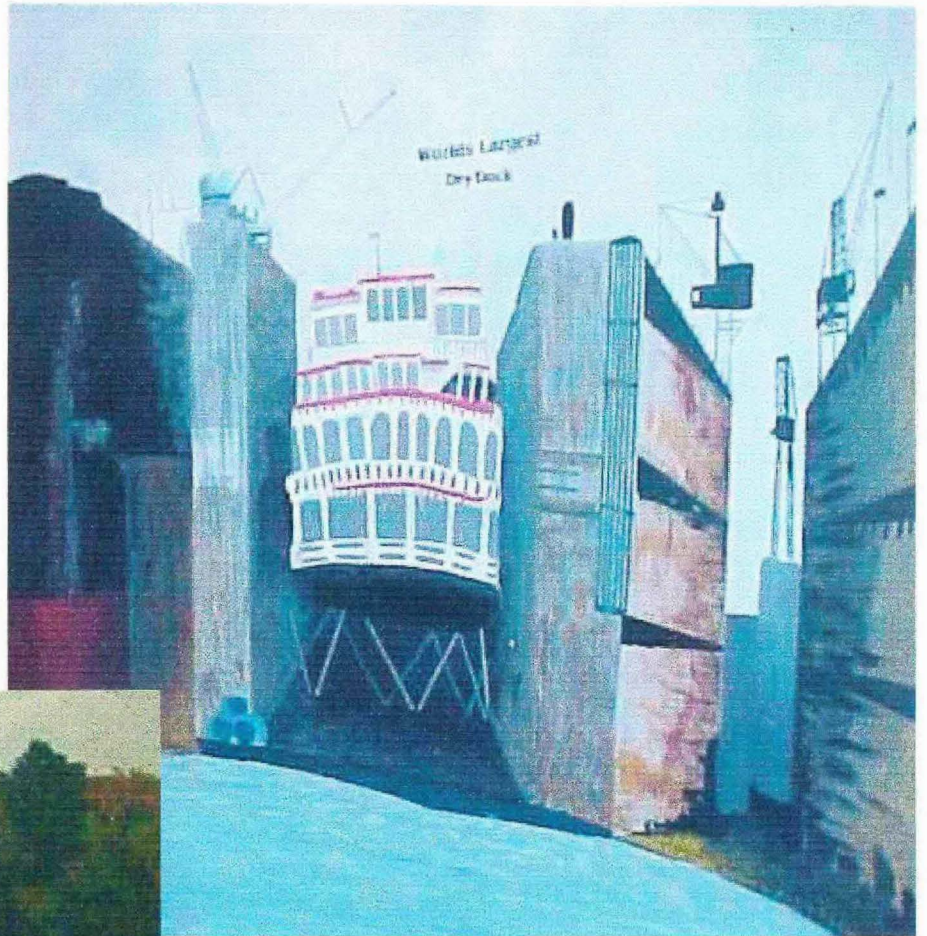




Willamette Falls



# Ship in Dry Dock in a quiet Lagoon



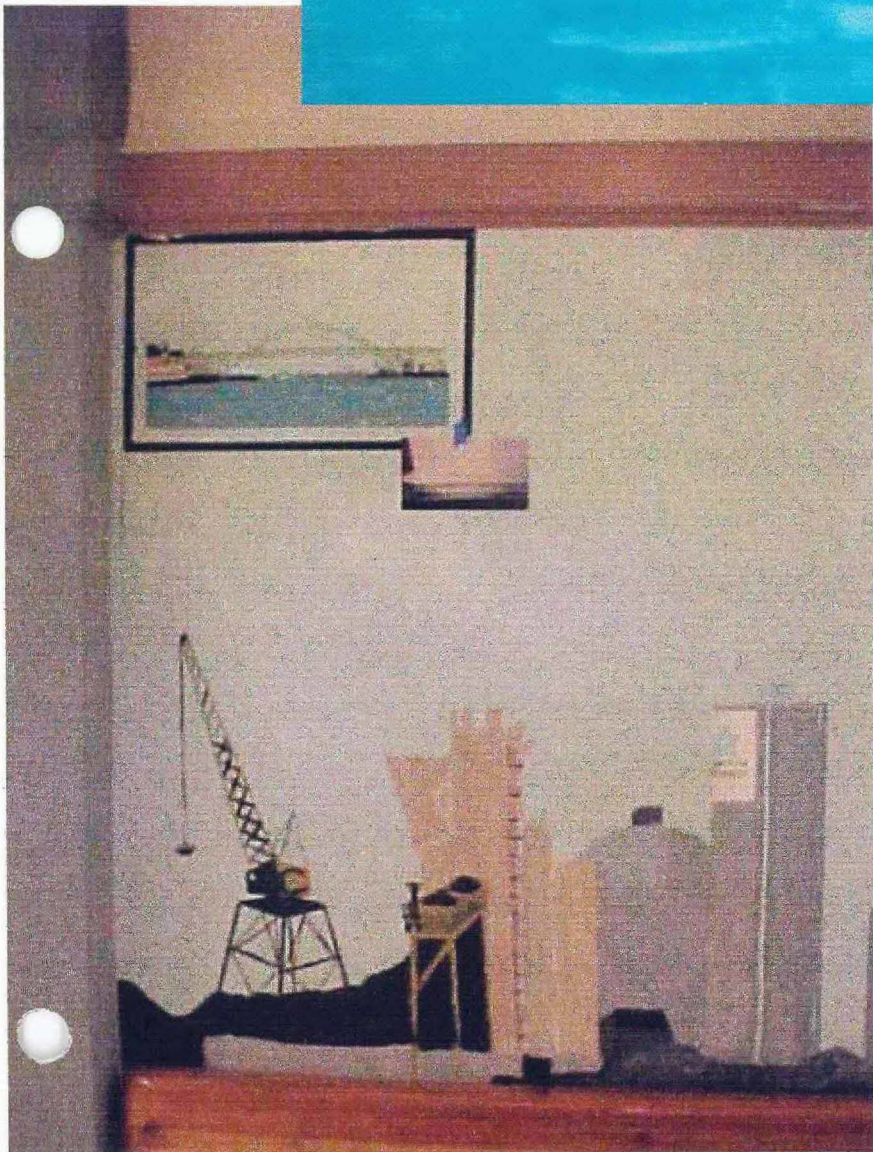
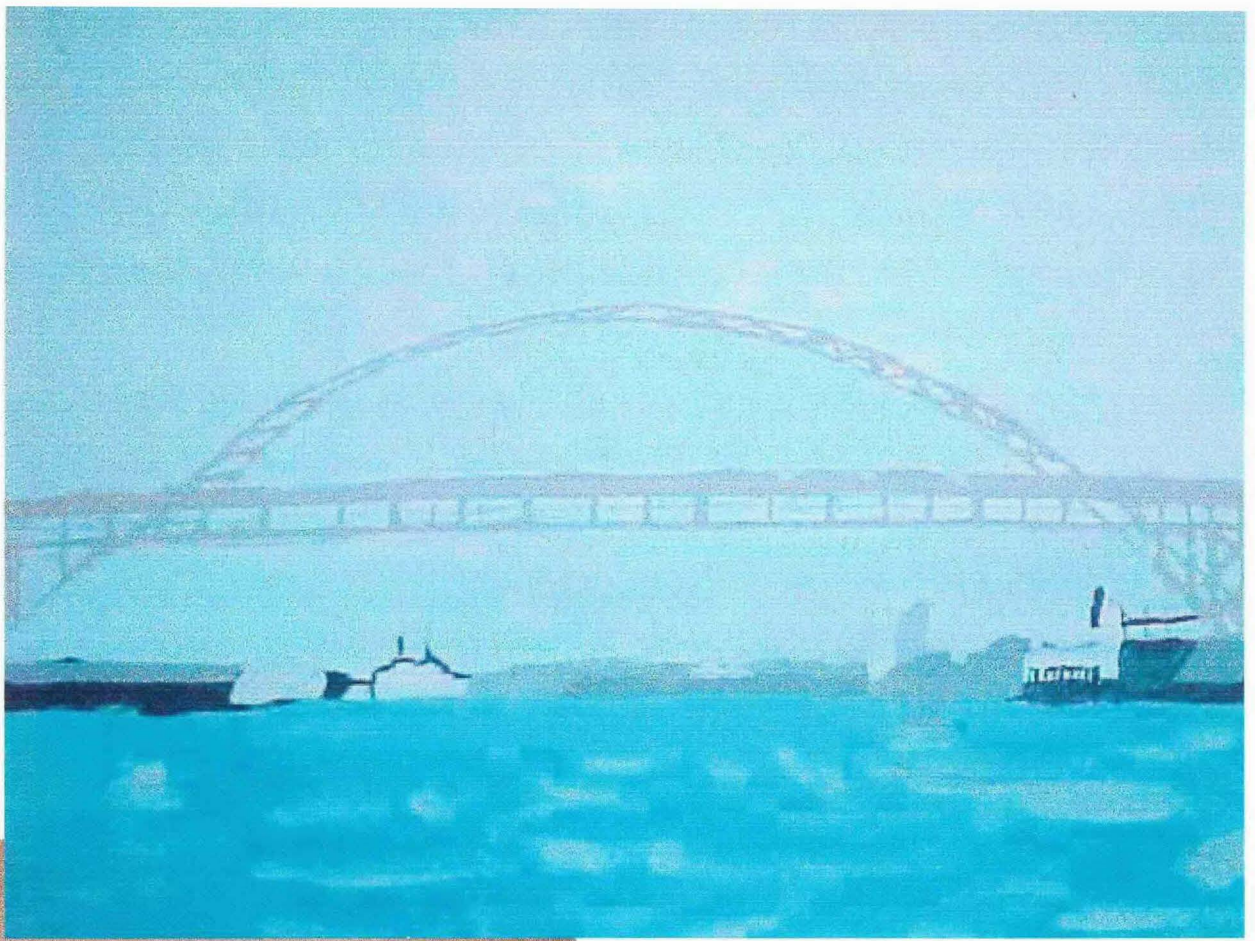
**CSO signage  
near Principal's Loo.**





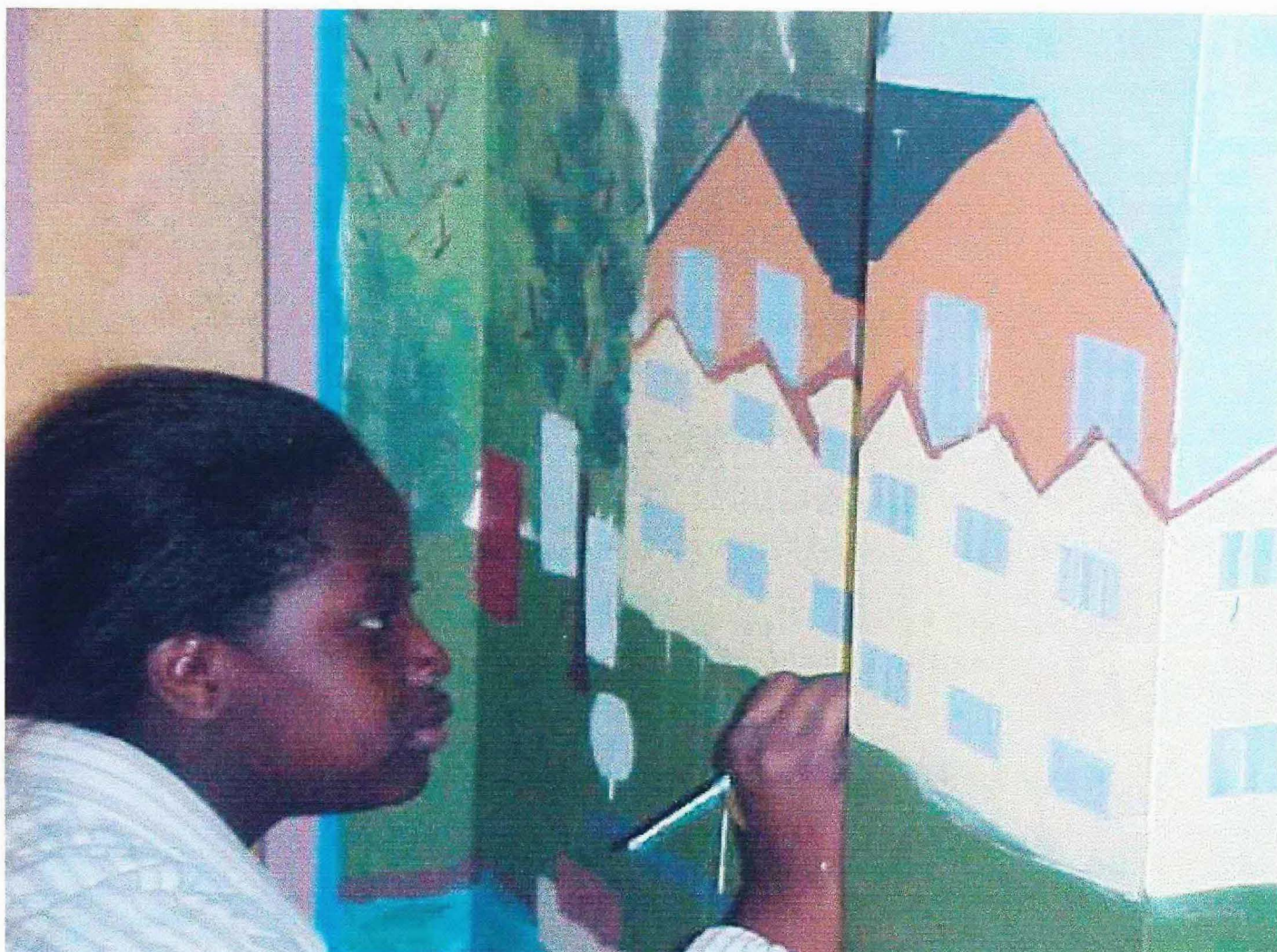
Downriver from  
Fremont Bridge?





**Grain elevators  
near the  
Fremont Bridge  
and an  
Inset**





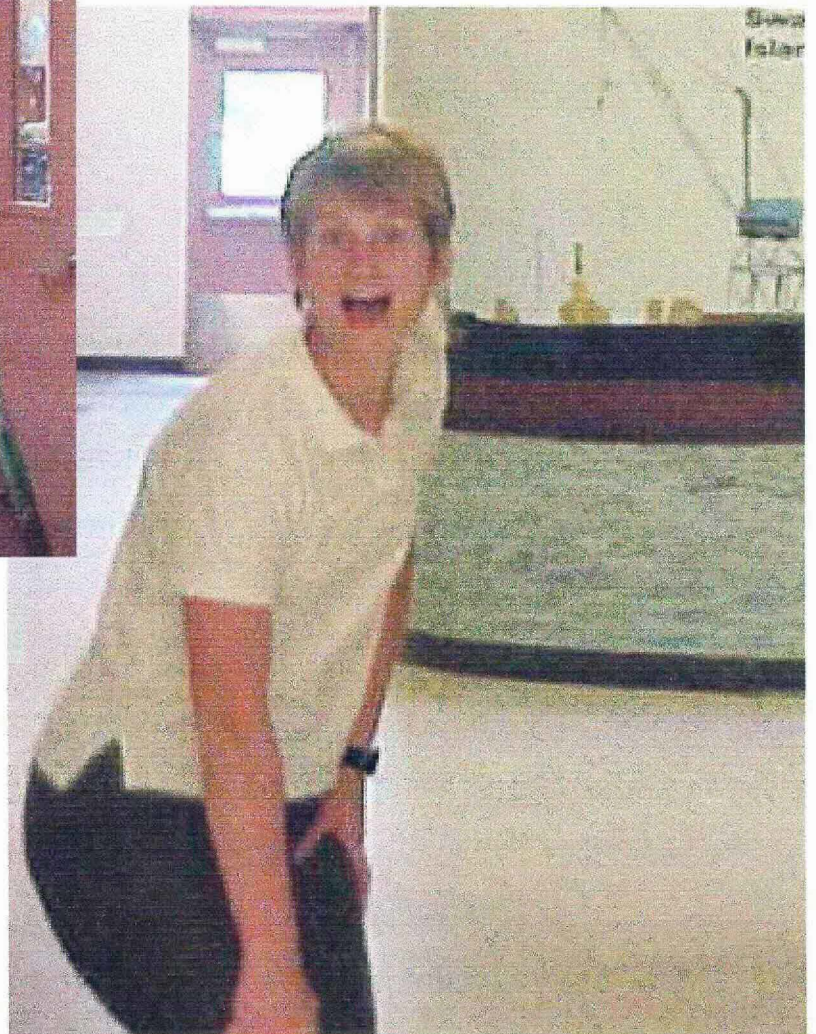
**Working inside  
a classroom doorway,  
but still concentrating**



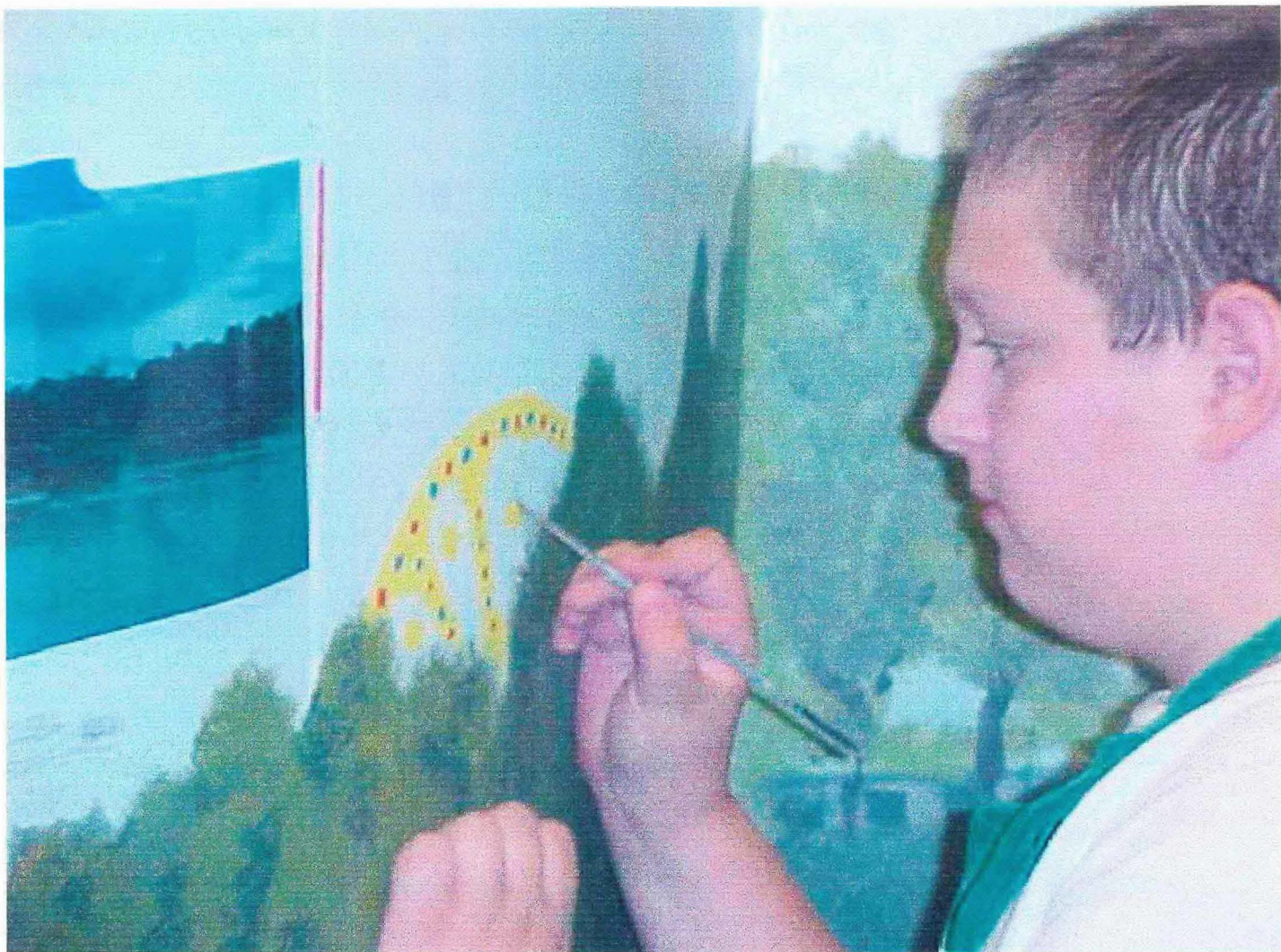


Artist-In-Residence  
Wendy Dunder

Americorp Member  
Brittin Witzenburg

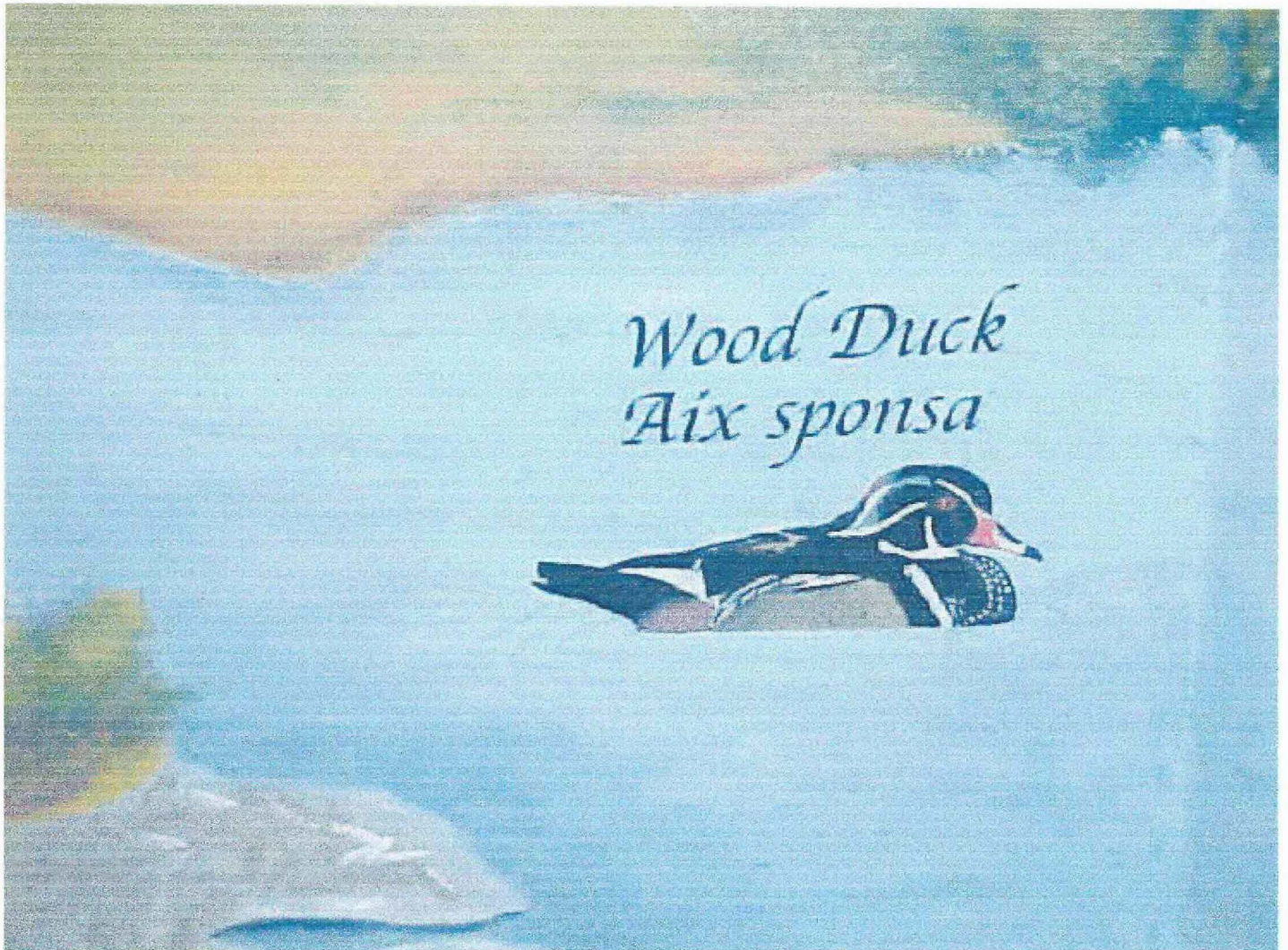






Detail with  
the aid  
of a  
film spool.



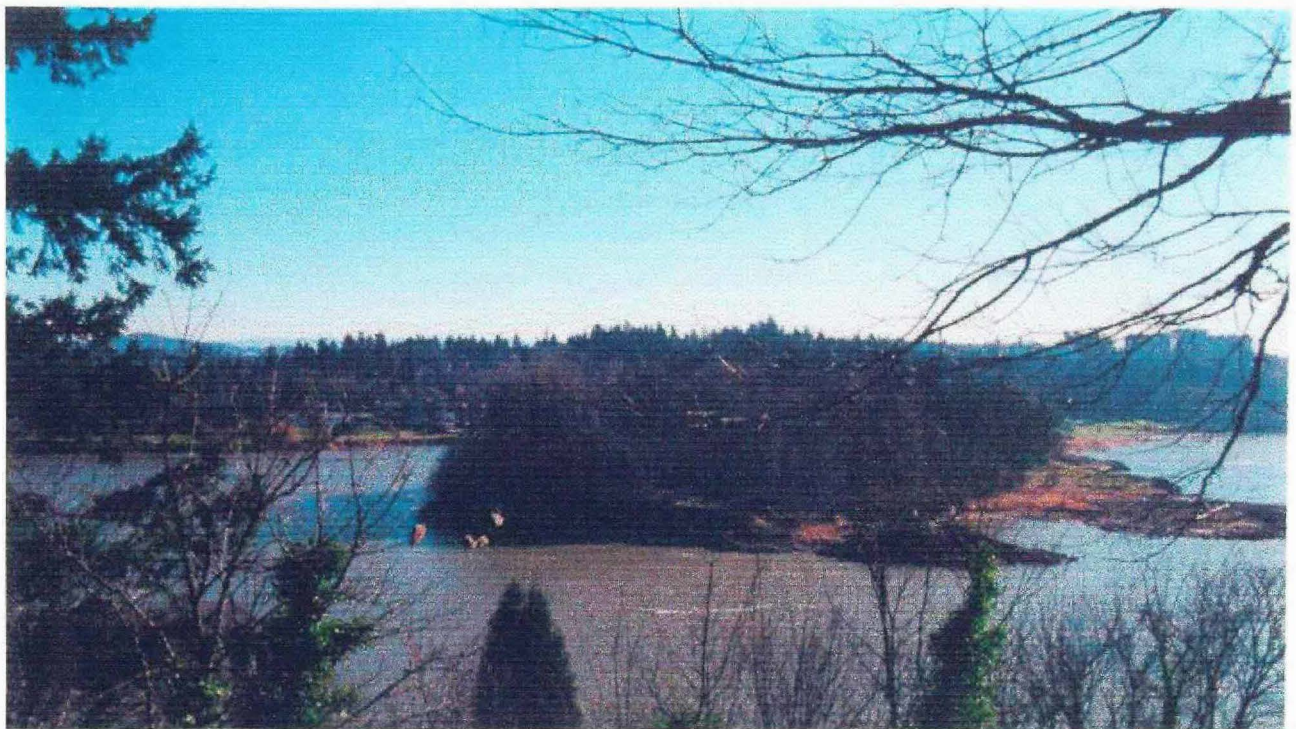


**Student do  
independent projects  
for native species,  
river history or issues.**

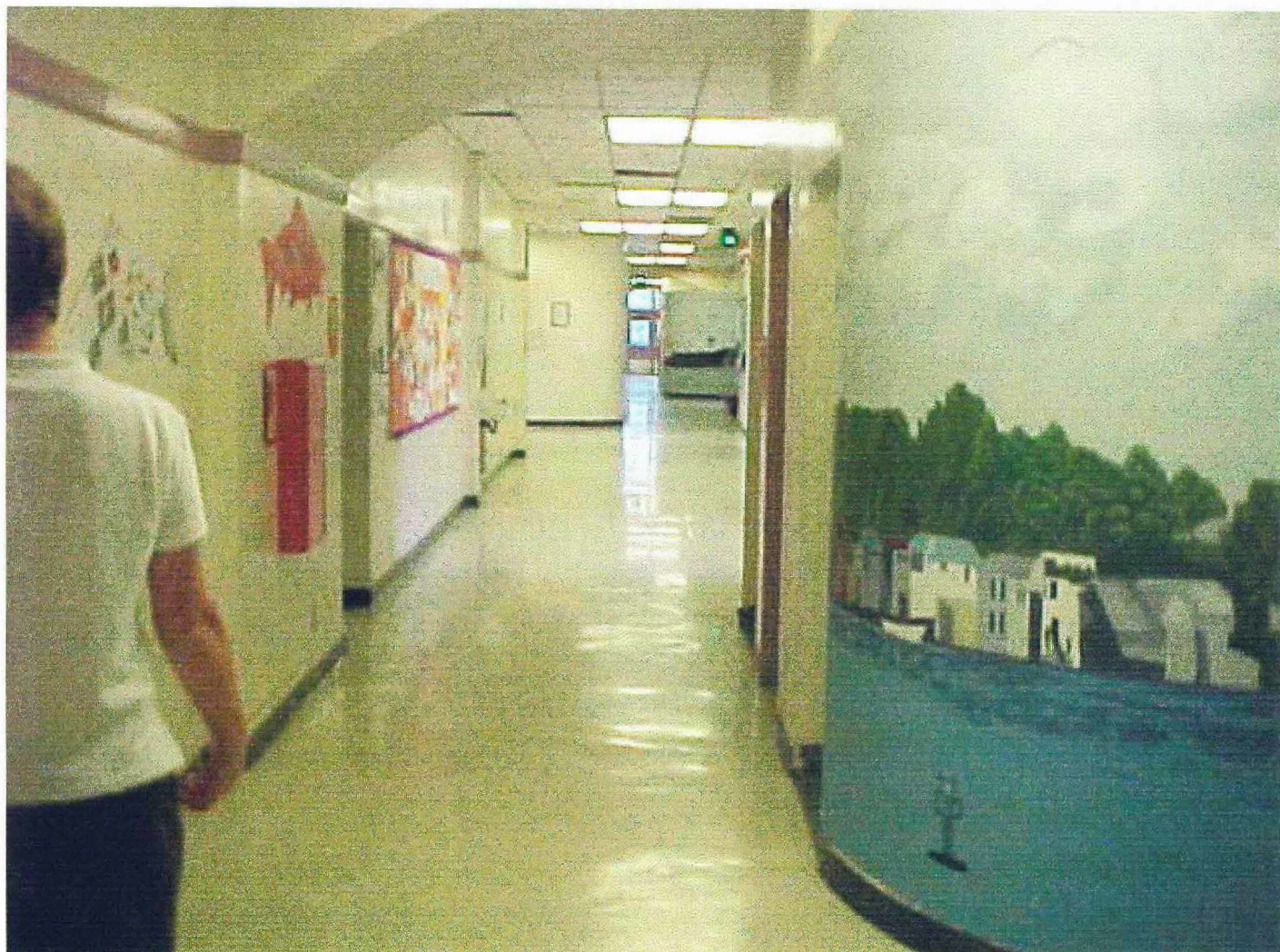


## Sections Painted February-June 2000

- Milwaulkie and Elk Island
- Swan Island
- Fremont Bridge
- Ross Island and Oaks Park
- Willamette Falls







*The middle*





Before...



Testing  
Water  
on board  
H2O Boat





### Data Collection Form

Recorder \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

Nearest street address	
Where on river-add to transect map.	
Distance of property along the river.	feet
Side of River	west or east
Land Use	
Environmental Index	
Distance from river	feet
Distance above high water mark	feet
Aspect-faces north, south, east or west	
Slope-vertical=90, horizontal=180	degree

# Record river reach attributes.

[illegible]



# **Schedule**

- **First trips October, 1999 Elk Island**
- **Wendy started January, 2000**
- **Brittin started February 7, 2000**
- **Wonder Team March Swan Island**
- **Susan's Team April Fremont Bridge**
- **8th grade May Willamette Falls**
- **ESL June**
- **Finish June 2001!**