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Political Races Take to the Tualatin River

TIGARD, OR The local political landscape might look a bit different if elections were decided by kayak races. On July 22 you will be able to see how that hypothetical scenario would play out for at least one legislative district.

On July 22 at 6:00 pm Tualatin Riverkeepers and Tigard Mayor Craig Dirksen will be hosting the 4th Annual Mayor's Challenge and Legislative Paddle Race at Cook Park, 17005 SW 92nd Avenue, Tigard. For the past several years local elected officials have put their honor on the line to race in canoes and kayaks on the Tualatin River. This year, just to make things more interesting, candidates for office have been invited to participate.

The first head-to-head race that has emerged this year is in District 26 between incumbent state rep Matt Wingard and challenger Sandy Webb. District 26 serves Wilsonville, Sherwood and southwest Washington County.

Several mayors will be competing to bring the trophy home to their city, but they will face stiff competition from two past winners, Metro Council President David Bragdon and Tualatin Valley Water District board member Marilyn McWilliams. "As more elected officials and candidates sign up for the event, we expect more rivalries to emerge" said Brian Wegener, event organizer for Tualatin Riverkeepers.

In an unusual twist in the competition between counties has turned to cooperation. Clackamas County Chair Lynn Peterson and Washington County Chair-elect Andy Duyck have decided to team up in a canoe. Politics makes strange paddle partners. When Commissioner Duyck was asked about Chair Peterson's competitive strategy, he responded, "I think she has it planned to sit in the front so that there is no way I can beat her across the finish line!"

The public is welcome to watch the event from Cook Park or from the turnaround at Ki-A-Kuts pedestrian bridge that joins, Cook, Durham, and Tualatin Parks. The Riverkeepers will use the event to publicize their campaign to complete the Tualatin River Water Trail with 4 new public access sites.

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