



Ribs cook on the Traeger at Washington Street Steakhouse & Pub. The lawsuit against Traeger Grills seeks to represent everyone who purchased Traeger pellets after Oct. 1, 2015, and claims that could be over a million people.

ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Lawsuit

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different types of wood and wood combinations in the pellets it sells under the Traeger brand.

The suit alleges Yates and others who purchased the wood pellets were injured and lost money.

The proposed class action seeks to represent every person who purchased Traeger pellets after Oct. 1, 2015. The suit says it believes over a million people are potentially members of the class.

The class action has yet to be certified.

According to the lawsuit, when Yates contacted the customer service department of Traeger Grills he was informed the Mesquite pellets did not contain any mesquite wood and the Texas Beef Blend pellets were not entirely made of oak, mesquite and pecan wood.

The pellets sold under the Traeger brand state “All Natural Harwood” on the packaging, but does not state the advertised flavor of wood is used in the making of the pellets

“Thus, for example, a reasonable consumer would understand that Defendant’s Mesquite BBQ Wood Pellets primarily consist of – if not entirely consist of – mesquite wood,” according to the lawsuit.

It alleges the apple, cherry and pecan pellets Traeger sells contain less than 1/3 of the advertised wood while the mesquite and hickory do not contain any of the advertised wood.

The Oak and Alder pellets contain varying amounts of the advertised

wood depending on where they are manufactured, according to the suit.

In Traeger’s advertising, it says it uses “100% natural, food-grade hardwood” in its pellets, which are manufactured at five mills it owns in the United States. It states it uses a small amount of food-grade soybean oil, which acts as a lubricant for its grills, in the pellets.

Traeger has used its same production process the past 16 years, according to the company.

“At the beginning of this year, prior to this lawsuit, we proactively made some changes to our packaging and are working to update our marketing materials to better communicate with our valued community,” a public relations representative for Traeger Grills said in an email.

Joe Traeger of Mt. Angel developed the first pellet grill in 1985 and patented it in 1986. The Traeger family sold Traeger Pellet Grills to a venture capitalist in Florida in 2006 for \$12.4 million.

The company was purchased by current CEO Jeremy Andrus and private equity firm Trilantic Capital Partners in 2014 and moved its headquarters to Utah from Oregon in 2015.

In July, Traeger Pellet Grills sued rival Dansons in district courts in Florida and Arizona alleging unfair trade practices by using Joe Traeger and son Brian Traeger in advertising and social media for their company.

In September, preliminary injunctions were granted in both jurisdictions preventing the Traegers from being used in advertising or making public appearances for Dansons, for which they now work.

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A group of volunteers and Forest Service employees cuts through a giant Douglas fir blocking the Jefferson Lake Trail in the Mount Jefferson Wilderness this summer. PHOTOS COURTESY OF U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Tree

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nator for Deschutes National Forest.

It wouldn’t be easy. Even lying down, the tree rose as tall as a basketball hoop. Cutting out even a narrow segment would mean hauling out a piece of wood that weighed thousands of pounds.

Toughest of all, they wouldn’t be allowed to use motorized tools due to the tree’s location inside a federally-designated wilderness area.

“This was the largest tree I’ve cut out of a trail in 11 years of working for the Forest Service,” said Drew Peterson, acting wilderness specialist for Deschutes National Forest. “Add to that we can only use primitive tools, mandated by the Wilderness Act, and we found ourselves in a pretty unique situation.”

Instead of chainsaws, they would employ a cross-cut saw old-time loggers often referred to as a “misery whip.”

But it would be worth it to add another attraction to a pathway that’s been a work in progress since the 2003 B&B Complex wildfire brought extensive damage to the Jefferson Lake Trail.

“It was really overgrown until Mark and Holly Scott adopted the trail and helped with a big push to clean it out and keep it open and clear,” Larson said.

Most of that work involved loppers and small handsaws. But cutting through this historic giant required something else entirely.

Led by veteran trail crew leader Wayne Chevalier, a group of 10 volunteers and Forest Service workers headed about a quarter mile up the trail this past summer.

The team started by clearing the tree’s thick bark. Then, they brought in a ladder to start cutting from the top.

“Even tipped over, it was around 4 feet over my head,” Larson said. “Using a cross-cut while standing on a ladder was definitely harder. You can’t use your body weight at all — it’s all arms.”

Normally, sawyers on a cross-cut use two-person teams with one person on each side. But in some places this tree too large.

“In the middle of the log, with both handles on the saw, you’d only have about 6 inches of pull on either side which isn’t enough to expel the chips/saw dust from the middle of the cut,” Peterson said.

So, they used single-person sawing for segments of the tree, before going back to two-person teams. Teams cut for about 15 minutes each, pounding in wedges as they went, before passing to the next person or team.

Finally, the slot was cut. But then they faced an even dicer problem: removing an 8,000 pound “round” from the middle of the tree to open the gateway.

“We put a choker cable around the round that attached to a ratchet puller we secured to a nearby tree,” Peterson said. “After we made two vertical cuts,

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A group of Forest Service employees cut through a giant Douglas fir blocking the Jefferson Lake Trail in the Mount Jefferson Wilderness this summer.

lined up just right, we were able to get the round rolling.”

The sheer weight of the round provided yet another challenge. After about 20 feet, the round stopped directly in the middle of the trail. The team couldn’t move it. So, they improvised, adding a small twist to the trail.

“We weren’t going to be able to move it again,” Peterson said. “So now the trail now zigs around the round and back through the gap in the tree, adding a little character to the trail.”

The entire process took about six hours. But the result is being able to hike down the trail and count the rings of a fallen giant that sprouted before Oregon was a whisper of an idea. According to a volunteer who carefully counted those rings, the tree’s age when it fell was 560.

“An operation like this really does take a village, especially when you’re using primitive tools,” Peterson said. “Doing it this way wasn’t necessarily the easy way — but it was the right way.

“If you get the opportunity, take a hike in and experience this tree,” Peterson said.

Jefferson Lake Trail

If you go: The Jefferson Lake Trail is located in the Mount Jefferson Wilderness northwest of Sisters. The trail begins at 3,100 feet, so should stay open a little longer before getting covered in snow. The giant tree is just up the trail. It’s 9.2 miles to Jefferson Lake itself. For more information and maps, contact the Sisters Ranger Station. (541) 549-7700

Help keep trails open

The group that adopted the Jefferson Lake Trail is SWATs (sawyers with attitude to spare). SWATs is a volunteer group that logs out the majority of wilderness trails on the Deschutes. To get involved contact the High Cascade Forest or Deschutes National Forest: jessica.larson@usda.gov.

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