

GUEST EDITORIAL

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus

The following is perhaps the most famous example of a child wanting to know if Santa is real.

Letter to the editor
The New York Sun, 1897

Dear Editor:

I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in The Sun it's so.' Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?

— Virginia O'Hanlon

Virginia,

Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.



Action needed to stop MERA logging

KATE PFISTER-MINOQUE
OTHER VIEWS

Immediate action is needed. In spite of strong community objections, the county has put out a bid to log the Red Apple area of the Mount Emily Recreation Area with a decision to be finalized before Christmas.

My family and I have lived on Mount Emily above the MERA for more than 40 years, hiking and biking there when the property belonged to Boise Cascade. It was exciting when the county, through use of various grants, purchased this property 10 years ago and created MERA for the enjoyment of all the people of our county.

More than 40 miles of trails have been built with the sweat equity of many local residents. Using the actual costs of \$36,296 per mile, based on costs of building similar trails at Anthony Lakes, the value of MERA trails can be estimated at \$1,451,840. On summer weekends there are typically 30-plus cars at all times of day in the MERA non-motorized parking area, often including several from out of state, as MERA is responsible for bringing tourists (and the significant dollars they spend) to our county.

There is widespread agreement about the need for forest management and fire prevention in MERA. However, there is significant dis-

agreement about how to accomplish this.

I am part of a growing group of local individuals, now known as Friends of MERA, concerned about the major logging project. In August 2020, many users of MERA were alerted to a plan to log by blue markings on large diameter trees identified for harvest along main trails. We finagled a walk-through with Sean Chambers (MERA manager) and Chuck Sarret (Union county forester), attended by 38 people.

We expressed our concern for removal of large healthy trees, presumably for their economic value, using processes that would damage the trail system and the beauty of the area. Our group thought we had reached some understanding of specifics related to protecting the area.

Fast forward, we learned that the county was not going to honor discussions of August 2020 and they plan to close MERA this winter into early summer for a major logging operation, using equipment that will damage trails and promote undergrowth that will increase fire risk. The plan includes removal of 30-inch-in-diameter trees that are fire resistant — trees wider than many people's outstretched arm span.

The county intended to send out a request for logging bid on Nov. 15, 2021, closing Nov. 22, and to award the contract by Dec. 10. The county posted a notice on the bulletin board at MERA that there would be a

meeting on Nov. 10 to announce the plan. If the Friends of MERA had not alerted the newspaper and social media, the sale would have occurred without further public input. The fact that the parking lot was packed on such short notice is testimony to the level of public concern.

Subsequently, many MERA users testified at a commissioner meeting Dec. 1 to object to this plan. Despite our concerns and requests to postpone the current logging plan, the county commissioners, responsible for this decision, have delegated the decision to Sean Chambers and Chuck Sarret. They have reposted an RFP to log the most popular trail section in MERA with a decision about the bid before Christmas.

Act now if you too care about protecting the Mount Emily Recreation Area. Although logging bids have been requested, no proposal has been accepted (as of the writing of this letter on Dec. 12). Contact:

- Paul Anderes, panderes@unioncounty.org
- Matt Scarfo, mscarfo@unioncounty.org
- Donna Beverage, dbeverage@unioncounty.org
- Sean Chambers, schambers@unioncounty.org
- Chuck Sarrett, linkedin.com/in/chuck-sarrett-ab9

Kate Pfister-Minogue is a health care provider and long-time local resident who feels MERA is important to the health of the community.

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