

Upstream

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Wasserman said he planned an “edgy” advertising campaign and reminded McLerran that the EPA already had spent \$500,000 developing it.

A conciliatory McLerran asked Wasserman to work with agriculture, but emphasized that the agency considered the matter a “policy issue, and not a legal issue.”

No EPA lawyer was at the meeting, a fact that worried the agency’s Puget Sound intergovernmental coordinator Lisa Chang, who had raised the issue of What’s Upstream’s legality.

“It seems to be a vulnerable position for EPA to be in to be speaking to Swinomish counsel without EPA counsel on hand,” Chang wrote shortly before the meeting in an email to EPA Puget Sound program manager Angela Bonifaci, who took the notes of the meeting.

According to Bonifaci’s notes, Wasserman said he didn’t intend to reach out to farm groups, but he did agree to meet with EPA officials to discuss the campaign’s content.

Five months later, the tribe and several environmental groups relaunched whatsupstream.com, disregarding some of EPA’s concerns about the website’s accuracy and tone, but delivering on Wasserman’s promise to wage a hard-hitting campaign to persuade state legislators to pass stricter regulations on agriculture.

Gerald Baron, the director of Save Family Farming, which formed this year to counter What’s Upstream, said the meeting notes show that McLerran allowed the project to proceed.

“We interpreted from the documents that we had earlier that McLerran green-lighted the campaign and now it’s very clear he green-lighted the campaign,” Baron said.

The EPA issued a statement saying the records, mostly internal emails, show the agency tried to alter the campaign’s tone.

“What these and previously released documents demonstrate is that the EPA consistently requested that the content of the ‘What’s Upstream’ project should be more factual and collaborative in nature to be consistent with National Estuary Program goals and intent,” according to the EPA.

“At all levels of the agency, from staff to the regional administrator, EPA expressed concerns — within the limits of our legal authorities as we understood them — that the language, imagery and goals of the program should be adjusted.

“While the tribe did not ultimately make all of the changes requested by EPA, they removed billboards and altered some web content.”

The EPA asked the tribe to remove What’s Upstream billboards in Olympia and Bellingham in late March after U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kansas, said the billboards were “disturbing” and “malicious” and typified the EPA’s antipathy toward farmers.

The tribe later also removed a “Take Action” link from the website that allowed people to send form letters to state legislators asking them to impose mandatory 100-foot buffers between farm fields and waterways. The website remains up.

The EPA has said its lawyers determined What’s Upstream was not engaged in lobbying. The EPA withheld some emails from disclosure, citing attorney-client privilege.

The EPA also said in its statement that the Swinomish tribe is no longer requesting funds for What’s Upstream. The EPA did not respond to a request for clarification on how much it spent. Previously released emails show the tribe planned to spend more than \$655,000.

Efforts to contact Wasserman were unsuccessful.

The EPA recognized that the campaign, which charged farmers with being unregulated polluters, would be controversial. In mid-December 2015, EPA staff members anticipated McLerran would be asked about What’s Upstream at a meeting of state and federal agencies hosted by the state Department of Ecology.

The staff provided McLerran with “talking points.” The points included the EPA’s position that What’s Upstream was “consistent with the goals” of a multi-agency plan to clean up Puget Sound.

Into 2016, What’s Upstream organizers continued to develop advertising to draw attention to their website. Strategies 360, a Seattle lobbying firm, developed ads that Chang of the EPA called “click bait.”

“I have significant concerns with the ads,” Chang wrote in a Jan. 14 email to EPA colleagues. “The images and text are designed to be provocative (click bait), to convey a message in a glance and provide no supporting context/background.”

Several months later, the tribe was seeking EPA’s permission to expand the campaign’s social media presence when federal lawmakers learned of the Northwest campaign, causing EPA to discontinue the project.



Photos by Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Steve Marlega of Northwest Reclaimed Lumber, left, and Danuta Burris of Salem Salvage examine the lumber of a grain elevator in Suver, Ore. Old wood from barns and other farm buildings is popular among woodworkers and home renovators.

Wood

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However, deconstruction also reduces the trauma of removing a structure with which people have developed a nostalgic connection, said Michelle Ratcliffe, a landowner near Hubbard, Ore., who worked with Salem Salvage to dismantle a barn earlier this year.

Ratcliffe thought of her old barn as “the world’s greatest lawn ornament,” while neighbors considered it a local attraction.

“People loved the barn,” she said. “It is really emotional for the people involved and the community.”

Unfortunately, the leaning structure had become dangerous. Renovating it would have been prohibitively expensive.

The deconstruction process, meanwhile, yielded salvageable wood that can be used as floorboards or other elements, as well as “trinkets and treasures,” such as an old hay trolley, Ratcliffe said.

“This is a valuable resource and it doesn’t need to go up in flames,” she said.

Terms vary

The terms of each deconstruction project are different, and in some cases, buildings have decayed too much for the process to be worthwhile, said Marlega.

As a rule of thumb, the value of reclaimed lumber offsets the cost of deconstruction to the landowner, who also saves money by having less waste material to dump at the landfill, he said.

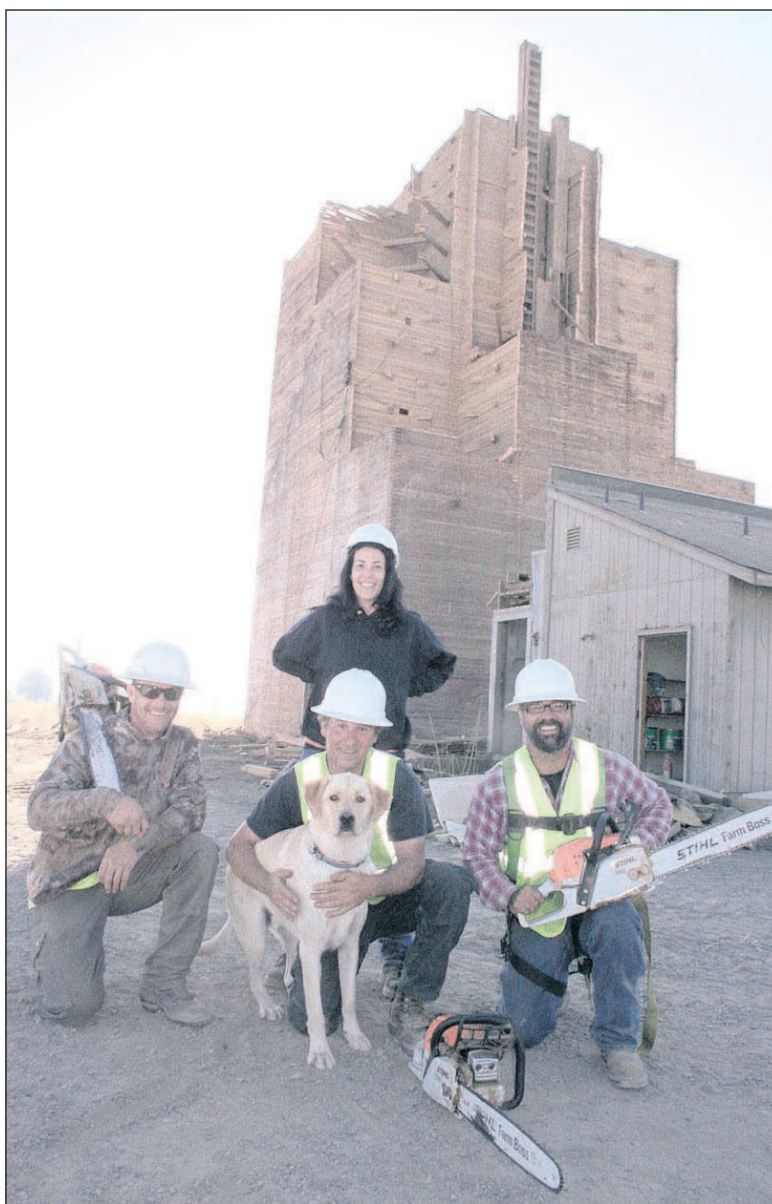
Salem Salvage earns roughly half its revenues by wholesaling the lumber to builders and woodworkers, and the other half by turning the wood into furniture, Burris said. The company also restores old barns as a supplementary seasonal business.

“I love wood and I love being creative, so it’s fun for me,” she said.

It’s critical for the company to keep track of the lumber’s origin, she said. “My guys in the yard know where each piece of wood came from.”

Such details are valuable for furniture-building companies such as The Shaker Craftsman in Yakima, Wash., which buys lumber from Salem Salvage.

Shaker Craftsman uses old-school joinery methods to make



Danuta Burris of Salem Salvage, top, stands near a partially dismantled grain elevator in Suver, Ore. with Dustin Stephenson, left, Steve Marlega, center, and Darell Braman, right, of Northwest Reclaimed Wood, as well as their dog, Cooper.

furniture from lumber that comes entirely from a single building, said Rhonda Cornwell, the company’s co-owner.

“They know I need that information,” she said. “If you provide that history, our customers really like that.”

Cornwell said she buys several species of reclaimed lumber from all over the U.S., but relies on Salem Salvage for old-growth Douglas fir.

Growing popularity

Television shows, magazines and social media devoted to home renovation have increased the popularity of reclaimed lumber, driving up both competition and prices, she said.

“People are wanting it more,” Cornwell said. “A lot of people are getting more aware of it.”

Aside from its age, reclaimed lumber intrigues people due to its texture.

“The coolest thing about it is the wood is amazing before you do anything to it,” said Terry Edwards, Burris’ husband and co-owner of Salem Salvage.

Unusual textures often develop from how a piece of wood is used over decades, he said.

For instance, the old Pacific Seed grain elevator contained wooden chutes that grain passed through.

Over time, the grain wore away the softer wood, leaving ripples similar to those created when water passes over sand, Edwards said.

Edwards plans to use the wood from the chutes to build a conference table for Wilbur-Ellis.

“We’re going to knock their



Old windows, boards and other reclaimed components of deconstructed buildings are on display at the yard of Salem Salvage in Salem, Ore. Old wood from barns and other farm buildings is popular among woodworkers and home renovators.



Workers from Northwest Reclaimed Wood, a deconstruction company, dismantle a grain elevator in Suver, Ore. Old wood from barns and other farm buildings is popular among woodworkers and home renovators.

socks off,” he said.

Another unique texture was created when generations of cows stomped on the floor boards of a barn, causing the softer wood to wear away faster than the knots, which then appeared elevated.

Edwards and Burris turned that lumber into a bench that a wife gave to her husband, a former cowhand.

“It told the story of how the cows had worked that wood just by walking on it and gave it a shape that a machine never could,” Edwards said.

Wheat

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Farmers and researchers are trying to figure out why so much damage occurred this year.

Some farmers told Sullivan it was “the best-looking wheat” they’d seen in years.

“The unfortunate thing is that prices are not cooperating, and having that much wheat on the market can sometimes have a negative impact,” she said.

At Portland on Monday soft white wheat traded for \$4.50 to \$4.76 per bushel. Hard red winter wheat ranged from \$4.02 to \$4.83 per bushel and dark northern spring wheat was \$5.63 to \$5.93 per bushel.

The prices are down significantly

from last October, when soft white wheat prices ranged from \$5.41 to \$5.50 a bushel.

Wheat with low falling number also brings a lower price. As of Sept. 13, 42 percent of soft white wheat samples collected by Washington State Grain Inspection showed a falling number of 300 or lower.

In Idaho, winter wheat production was 66.7 million bushels, up 15 percent from last year. Spring wheat production was 34.4 million bushels, up 13 percent.

In Oregon, winter wheat production was 35.5 million bushels, up 3 percent from last year. Spring wheat production was 4.4 million bushels, down 5 percent.

Oregon Wheat CEO Blake Rowe said his organization believes the NASS numbers for his state are a

little low, and are more likely in the low to mid-40 million bushel range for “more of an average yield year.”

Low prices remain a concern, he said.

There is “nothing I can point to that will drive prices higher other than hope,” Rowe said.

Wheat acreage varied across the region, according to NASS.

Idaho farmers harvested 710,000 acres of winter wheat, the same as in 2015. Spring wheat dropped 9.2 percent to 395,000 acres.

Winter wheat yields increased from 82 to 94 bushels per acre and spring wheat yields rose from 70 to 87 bushels per acre.

The harvested Oregon winter wheat acreage was 710,000 acres, a decrease of 3.4 percent. Harvested spring wheat acreage dropped 6.5

percent 87,000 acres.

Winter wheat yields increased from 47 to 50 bushels per acre. Spring wheat yields were 51 bushels per acre, up 1 bushel from 2015’s yields.

Washington farmers harvested 1.67 million winter wheat acres, up 21.6 percent from 2015. They harvested 530,000 acres of spring wheat, a drop of 16.5 percent from 2015.

Winter wheat yields rose from 56 to 78 bushels per acre. Spring wheat yields were 51 bushels per acre, up from 36 in 2015.

Nationwide, total wheat production increased 12 percent from 2.06 billion bushels in 2015 to 2.3 billion bushels this year. The average yield increased from 43.6 to 52.6 bushels per acre.