

Pihl Logging Forester Tucker Williamson Retires

By Scott Laird

Tucker Williamson doesn't look like a guy who is about to retire. But he is. And he sure doesn't sound like a guy who is planning to slow down. And he probably won't.

Tucker Williamson has spent the last forty years living and working in Oregon as a Forester, after relocating from Alabama. He has spent the last two and a half years working here in Vernonia with Mike Pihl Logging, but was calling it quits, so to speak, in October.

"I have really enjoyed working for Mike," said Williamson, relaxing at the end of a workday in his office at Pihl Logging. "With Mike it's about getting things done, and that's how I like to work."

Williamson who at sixty-four years old is still tall and slim with a full head of hair doesn't look a day over fifty, and looks like he could out-hike just about anybody I know.

"I hope to continue to work a bit, maybe help with replanting some properties that I helped log and am pretty familiar with," said Williamson when asked about his plans for retirement. "My wife and I hope to settle back in Central Oregon, maybe around Prineville. We would like to travel some. We plan to go to Texas, she wants to go to Australia, and I would like to get up to Alaska. I haven't been fishing for about ten or fifteen years, so I'm planning on doing some of that. I enjoy Chucker hunting. I might get in touch with the local Search and Rescue, and see if I can get involved with them. I don't want to just sit around and wear out the TV remote."

Williamson, who graduated from Auburn University in 1967 with a degree in Forest Management, found work at Fort Rock in the Deschutes National Forest for two seasons on a fire crew. "I was always interested in the outdoors as a kid, especially the West," explained Williamson. "I remember growing up and

seeing Weyerhaeuser ads in the Saturday Evening Post that showed these beautiful scenic views of Oregon and Washington. They really made an impression, and got me interested in this area, and that's one reason I headed out this way."

Williamson found permanent work as a Forester in the Bend Area, and spent the next thirty-five years working for Crown Zellerbach, Willamette Industries, Weyerhaeuser, and other companies during a series



of buy outs and mergers. In 2003 he went back to logging and did some forestry consulting before finding a spot with Pihl Logging in March of 2005.

"I did beginning forestry work, some logging, road engineering, trucking supervision, land management," Williamson explained to me, when asked what exactly does a forester do? "In the central and eastern Oregon forests where I spent most of my time, there is

a lot of forest management that goes on. You have to manage the harvest levels, where to harvest, whether to partial cut, or selective harvest. It really is as much an art as it is a science. A lot of the time you say 'I think this will work', and you give something a try."

Williamson told me a story about managing forests. "We had a situation in Eastern Oregon where there was a lot of damage being done to the Lodge pole Pines by Mountain Pine Beetles. The Forest Service lost a lot of their harvest, hundreds of millions of board feet. I was in private industry, and we were able to move quicker, make decisions, and try some different techniques, and we saved almost all our trees. I was really proud of the way we managed our properties and were able save a lot of value."

"The community of Vernonia is really a special place," said Williamson about his time here. "I love to get out and exercise, and have enjoyed using the Linear trail around the lake. There is also so much community spirit and togetherness here. There are so many activities, and events. And to see the way the community rallies around itself, and helps those in need, like the Schaumburg family, well that is just rare in the world these days."

"I really enjoy being out on the ground, being directly involved in the production," said Williamson. "With the big companies, it was always endless meetings. With Mike Pihl, a long meeting is five minutes, maybe ten. I really liked the pace of things here. Mike likes to find an opportunity, get the permits, get together a crew, and get to work. It's about getting things done, and that's what I like."

It doesn't sound like things are going to change much in retirement for Tucker Williamson. Vernonia's Voice wishes Tucker the best of luck!

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Columbia River Youth Corps Works in Vernonia

Staff Article

The Columbia River Youth Corps has a new sponsor, the City of Vernonia. Students from the education/work training program based in St. Helens spent eight days in late September and early October learning vocational skills and having instruction in trail building while helping construct Phase I of the Vernonia Bicycle Skills Park.

"We are very happy to be a part of this project," said Anna Vacca, director of the program. "The students are really excited to be working on this, and we are looking forward to helping get this new park up and running."

The trail crew which consisted of seven crew members and a crew leader, helped build trails, construct technical trail features, build bridges and clear brush and debris at the Skills Park site.

Columbia River Youth Corps works throughout the state of Oregon on a wide variety of projects that help youth, community and the environment throughout the state.

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