

VERNONIA'S voice

reflecting the spirit of our community

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Forestry Program at Vernonia High School Takes Root

By Scott Laird

Vernonia is known as a logging community. The logging industry is part of the community's heritage and history. Logging was what brought people to the region originally and what made this town famous in the past. The high school teams here are called



Vernonia High School has a new Forestry class where students learn about working in the woods.

the "Loggers" and logging continues to be this community's legacy, even after mills have closed, jobs have disappeared and outfits have gone out of business. Vernonia continues to be famous for its axemen; now even the high school has a program to teach local students about working in the woods.

This fall Vernonia High School (VHS) began its own Forestry program as part of the Natural Resources curriculum the school district is promoting. The new Forestry class is being taught by Byron Brown, who teaches Social Sciences—history, government, modern problems. Now Brown is also teaching plant identification, chain saw safety, and how to recognize the signs

of a healthy watershed.

"This Forestry program is a key piece to the Natural Resources curriculum because it obviously ties in with our local economy," says Aaron Miller, principal at Vernonia's Washington Grade School who is also overseeing the programming aspect of the new curriculum for the District. "It ties in with the history of the town and how people have survived and made a living and what built this place."

The VHS Forestry class currently has eighteen students enrolled; there was an additional waiting list of students who were also interested in participating in the program. Right now the two credit class is considered an elective—there is hope that in the future students can count the class towards required science credit.

Brown is a good fit as the instructor for a Forestry class; he was part of the Dislocated Worker program several years ago and retrained to become a

teacher. Previously he worked as a logger in the woods as a rigging slinger or hook tender; he spent twenty years working around Coos Bay, the south coast of Oregon and southeast Alaska.

The VHS Forestry program is being developed as a partnership between several entities including the OSU Extension Service, Bighorn Logging, Mark Standley with Logsafe, Inc., Hancock Timber Management, Longview Timber, the City of Vernonia, and the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC). "These are all partners we are working with closely to put this together and to implement it," says Miller. "I believe these will be valuable and long term partnerships that will be lasting—they are local people and local groups that are interested in having schools be a part of what they do."

Miller says Brown has done an excellent job putting together the class curriculum, putting in a lot of extra hours of his own time this past summer. Brown talked with instructors at both Knappa and Philomath High

Schools, where successful forestry programs already exist.

Brown says he has been able to tailor his program based on the other successful high school programs he surveyed. "There is a lot of variability among the different forestry programs around the state," explains Brown. "Our outline is based on what some of the other schools are doing, but there is so much that we can kind of pick and choose what we think will be relevant to the kids we have in our program right now."

The early weeks of the program have focused on science and biology—plant and animal identification, forest measurements, compass and pacing, how to do regeneration surveys. Brown says the class has already spent time in the field on Longview Timber lands, where students have done survey work on trees that were replanted, taking sample plots and estimating the health of the trees, how many trees per acre, and how old the trees are. The class will be working with Mark Dreyer, a private forester from Rainier who will spend a day each week working with the class out on field work. The class recently had a demonstration on chain saw safety and will get a chance to work cutting fire wood in the field soon.

The program continues to be a work in progress and will be adjusted to fit the needs and interests of the students. Brown says if enough students want to continue with the program next year, it could be expanded to include a Forestry II class. "This is a program that is in evolution," says Brown. "There are limitations because we haven't done this here before and there are limitation of what I am capable of teaching. I think most teachers will tell you, the first time around with anything, there will be some adjustments. There will be some experimentation as we see what

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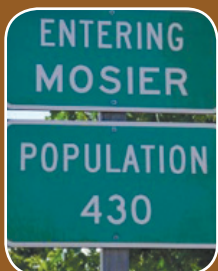
Sheriff Dickerson to Hold Town Hall in St. Helens

Columbia County Sheriff Jeff Dickerson will hold a Town Hall meeting on November 15, 2011 from 7:00 to 9:00 PM at the St. Helens High School Auditorium, 2375 Gable Road. Dickerson will make a short presentation about recent loss of services and

there will be an opportunity for citizens to express their concerns as well as ask questions. Citizens will also be able to sign up for a tour of the county jail facility.

For more information contact the Columbia County Sheriff's Office at 503-366-4611

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November 9 – This is a TEST!

On Wednesday, November 9 at 11:00 AM Oregonians will hear on their radios and see on their televisions a test of the emergency alert system (EAS). The test will last approximately thirty seconds. Normal programming will return following the test. This is a nationwide test organized by the FCC and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

This test will be different than those we have had in the past. The November 9 test will utilize a "live" national alert code, i.e., a coded message that will present itself as an actual emergency

announcement, not a test. This is necessary in order to allow FCC and FEMA to test the actual working order reliability of legacy EAS equipment and the state of readiness of EAS operators and participants. Television stations are being encouraged to run a scroll at the bottom of the screen throughout the test stating that it is just a test.

Oregon Office of Emergency Management (OEM), FEMA, Broadcasters, NOAA and many other agencies are diligently trying to get the word to people that this is, in fact, a test. Often, citizens

who are unsure of whether the alert is real or a test, place calls to 911 which tie up the phone lines for legitimate emergencies.

If anyone has questions about the test, please do NOT call 911. Please tell your neighbors and friends about this test so that Oregonians will be the most informed of all the states and will not be caught off guard by this unusual test of the EAS equipment.

More information can be found at www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas_info.shtml