

Readers Lend Their Voices...

To the Editor,

According to the miners, their world will end if the Depletion fee is increased as proposed by Measure 5-243. The proposed increase in the Natural Resource Depletion Fee will be on the May 19, 2015 ballot for voter approval.

The miners are saying that it will be disastrous for small businesses; that they will have to cut back on hours and operations, when in reality, they are increasing work hours and operations to seven days a week to handle demand for the rock they mine. This fee has not been increased in 18 years. Heck, even the County is projecting increased mining in 2015 and 2016.

In 2012 – 2.19 million tons of rock was mined

In 2013 –2.87 million tons of rock was mined

In 2014 2.51 million tons of rock was mined

The projected mining tonnages for 2015 and 2016 are 3.12 million tons and 3.3 million tons, respectively.

How can this mean that there will be a loss of jobs or a slowdown of production? How will the increase in mining mean that people will lose jobs or small businesses will suffer?

Cal Portland runs three barges per day, 7 days per week out of their site on the Multnomah Channel. Just one of those barges hold 2,200 tons of rock. Multiply these tonnages by 52 weeks in a year, throw in the cost of a ton and you can

see that our miners are making a lot of money. Huge amounts of rock are going out of our county. The reporting that the miners are required to provide the county is essentially an honor system. So we have no real idea how much is actually being mined and sold. The miners have it too easy here. You will not be able to drive them out with a stick!!!

On top of that, these companies enjoy an IRS depletion deduction, which is usually 5% of the value of the depletion. When the math is done, they receive a huge business deduction. The State of Oregon also allows for a depletion allowance that helps miners, the timber industry and natural gas industry. The small businesses that the miners are so worried about are already passing any increases on to their customers.

The miners are also saying that this measure targets one industry, which simply is not true. The IRS defines “Depletion” as the using up of natural resources by mining, drilling, quarrying stone or cutting timber. The depletion deduction allows the miners to account for the reduction of a product’s reserves, whether it be rock, timber, stone or natural gas, i.e., the natural gas in Mist/Birkenfeld. Some natural resources can eventually be replaced, like the trees that owners are required to replant, but this is not an option for the miners. When the rock and the natural gas is gone, they are gone for good.

Voters, if you believe the miner’s propaganda, we will lose our public transit system, as we know it and our roads will continue to deteriorate. We will be left with nothing but holes in the ground.

In 1990, the Commissioners put out a measure to increase the depletion fee by a nickel. The voters approved that measure. Then again, in 1996, the Commissioners put out another measure to increase the depletion fee by 10 cents to 15 cents. And you the voters overwhelmingly approved that measure too. Isn’t it about

time, after 18 years, that the fee be increased for roads improvements and CCRider Transportation? I urge you to vote yes on Measure 5-243 on May 19th.

Thelma Bonar
Chief Petitioner
Safer Roads Bridges and CCRider Transportation

To the Editor,

Measure 5-243 is an initiative that raises our county aggregate extraction fee 35 cents a ton. Part of the fee will go to repair county roads and the rest will go toward helping our Columbia County Rider Transportation Service stay in business.

Good roads are part of our infrastructure and the commerce within our county depends on our roads. Even if we ignore our roads we can not ignore the fact that if we cut CC Rider we will lose jobs.

Last year CCRider fixed rides accounted for more than 126,000 rides. Many of these people depend on CCRider to get to work. Others depend on CCRider to take them to school or shopping. In addition to the fixed rides, flex route and dial-a-ride accounted for 23,000 riders last year. CCRider is part of our County infrastructure and lots of people, workers, students, and seniors depend on it.

In 1997 the gravel companies were charging \$6-\$10 a ton, they are now charging \$20-\$30 a ton. The cost raised by our 35 cents a ton extraction fee will only be \$3.50 for a 10 ton truck load, a pittance compared to the profits that these multi-national mining companies make.

Our rock and gravel are a county natural resource. Once it is gone, all that will remain are broken roads and unfilled holes in the ground.

If you love our county and you want to build infrastructure and jobs, please vote “YES” on Measure 5-243

Bill Eagle
St. Helens, OR

Vernonia Weather March 2015

DATE	HIGH	LOW	PRECIP
1	56	26	.09
2	51	25	0
3	55	23	0
4	57	22	0
5	61	26	0
6	65	29	0
7	66	29	0
8	71	28	0
9	67	31	0
10	65	33	.03
11	56	41	T
12	66	39	0
13	66	51	.27
14	57	51	1.75
15	59	33	.20
16	61	33	0
17	52	34	.20
18	60	37	0
19	65	36	0
20	60	41	.05
21	57	35	0
22	56	39	.10
23	51	35	.90
24	56	47	.15
25	57	45	.02
26	71	42	T
27	66	42	.13
28	61	39	0
29	64	39	T
30	66	43	.02
31	52	36	.15
Ave/Tot	60.4	35.8	4.06

Weather data is collected at the U.S. Weather station at the Vernonia Water Plant

Upcoming Events

Coffee with the Columbia County Commissioners - Friday, April 17, 9:00 AM at the Black Iron Grill, 831 Bridge Street.

Stub Stewart State Park Clean Up Day - Saturday, April 18, 9:00 AM - Noon at the Hilltop Day-Use Area. Call Park Ranger Terra Kemper for more info. 503-324-0606 x223

Vernonia Sportsman’s Banquet - Saturday, April 18, 6:00 PM at the Vernonia Christian Church, 410 North St. Tickets on sale at R&S Market.

The Power of Play: Promoting Health and Creativity - Tuesday, April 21, 6:30 PM at the Vernonia Public Library. Join Jonathan Blasher and Tara Doherty for this Conversation Project sponsored by Oregon Humanities.

Upper Nehalem Watershed Council Board Meeting - Thursday, April 23, 6:30 PM at the UNWC office, 1201 Texas Ave.

Vernonia Volunteer Firefighter’s Pancake Breakfast - Saturday, April 25, 7:00 AM - Noon at the Vernonia Fire Station, 555 E. Bridge St. Payment by donation only.

Make Vernonia Shine Day - Saturday, April 25, 9:00 AM - Noon. Register at City Hall, 1001 Bridge St. Contact Donna Webb 503-429-5201 or donnatwebb@gmail.com

20th Annual Spring Garden Fair by Columbia County Master Gardeners™ - Saturday, April 25, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM at the St. Helens High School.

Spring Tea - Saturday, April 25, 1:00-3:00 PM at the Vernonia Christian Church, 410 North St. Sponsored by Vernonia P.E.O. to honor mothers, daughters, grandmothers, aunts, sisters and girlfriends. Light luncheon, entertainment, photos, etc. \$7 tickets are available at R&S Market.

Mist-Birkenfeld Volunteer Fire Fighter Assoc. Spaghetti Feed - Saturday, April 25, 5:00 - 7:00 PM at the Mist-Birkenfeld Main Station, 12525 Hwy 202, Mist. Adults \$5, Kids 5-12 \$3, Under 5 free. 503-755-2710

Kindergarten Round Up - Thursday, April 30. Call 503-429-1333 to schedule an appointment.

Safe Kids Columbia County Car Seat Clinic - Saturday, May 2, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM at the Vernonia Fire Station, 555 E. Bridge Street. More info: 503-556-3736

Friends of the Banks Public Library Plant, Book and Art Sale - Friday, May 8, 2:00 - 7:00 PM and Saturday, May 9, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM at Schlegel Hall in Sunset Park, Banks.

Vernonia Community Garden Fair & Plant Sale - Saturday, May 9, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM at the School Commons. 503-429-0196

LEED/Green Globes Celebration - Saturday, May 9 at 10:30 AM inside the Vernonia Schools building.

HOW TO SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vernonia’s Voice welcomes and requests your thoughts, opinions and ideas. Please include your name, address and phone number, limit your letters to 300 words or less. Vernonia’s Voice reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted. We will print letters space permitting. Deadline is the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month. Email: scott@vernoniasvoice.com or mail to: Letters, PO Box 55, Vernonia, OR 97064.

Do You Need Help? Call for meeting times and locations

Columbia Community Mental Health
Call 503-397-5211 -or- 1-800-294-5211
For after hours Crisis call: 1-866-866-1426
<http://www.ccmh1.com/crisis.html>

Narcotics Anonymous NW Region 503-345-9839
<http://portlandna.com/>

Alcohol Anonymous NW Region 503-366-0667
<http://www.pdxaa.com/>

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