

# Readers Lend Their Voices...

To the Columbia County Board of Commissioners,

As a forestland owner for over 60 years, I find the request from Weyerhaeuser for line lot adjustments to be unreasonable, unjustified, and somewhat offensive to all of us forestland owners who have followed the Columbia County Land Use customs and regulations all of these past years. Granting approval would initiate a long and unadvisable "slippery slope" of which there is no return.

You may be aware that the state of Washington has some lax land use statutes, and of course, subdivisions spring out all over the state. This certainly is counter to the thoughts of most land use experts who believe development needs careful planning - not approval of this whimsical scheme.

Oregonians were faced with the outcomes from the passage of Measure 37, but recanted and passed Measure 49 which managed and controlled development in rural areas of the state. I would urge you, as a Commissioner, not break this trust with the voters. The voters intentions were made very clear.

I would also advise you to support the decisions made by Glen Higgins who rightfully denied the application. This county department has consistently, uniformly, and fairly applied the Land Use regulations and requirements for all Columbia County residents. The new kid on the block (Weyerhaeuser) does not merit any special consideration in our county.

Finally, this appeal should

have been rejected immediately by the Columbia County Commissioners since there appears to be no extenuating circumstances.

Paul Nys  
Rainier

To the Editor,

Weyerhaeuser Co. is not the timber company it once was. Now it operates in speculation, real estate and subdivisions, and is run by hedge fund managers. The people who now run the company care nothing for rural areas whose residents for generations have hunted and hiked through the vast forests of Columbia County. The new Weyerhaeuser officials have little regard for the term "good corporate neighbors." Their bottom line is simply making more money, no matter how small in the scheme of the company's overall wealth, by selling a limited supply of local permits and closing off access to the forests.

Some would argue restricted access was done because of a few people who have dumped garbage on Weyerhaeuser property. While I find dumping of garbage absolutely wrong, I believe it was a piteous excuse to close the logging roads. I also believe there was several alternative ways to address garbage dumping. For example, Weyerhaeuser could have hired several forest personnel to patrol the roads - positions paid for from the hundreds of millions of dollars the company receives in tax breaks or from savings from publicly subsidized logging road construction.

Here are a few facts about the freebies Weyerhaeuser receives

from public coffers so that you may understand why the company needs to close off the forests and charge a permit fee.

In the Oregon 2013-2015 Tax Expenditure Report, the Oregon Department of Revenue reveals that Oregon and counties will lose more than \$285 million per year in tax revenues because of tax exemptions and reductions directed at the big timber elite - those who own more than 5,000 acres.

There are other tax exemptions given for logging roads (see page 260 of the report) and logging equipment, which was not included in the \$285 million figure.

Oregon's timber industry receives upwards of \$300 million in state tax breaks each year.

Oregon's biggest timber companies are exporting as much as one billion board feet of raw logs to Asia each year - without paying a dime in taxes to support Oregon schools or county governments.

In 1977 Gov. Bob Straub and the Oregon Legislature bequeathed the timber industry an exemption to paying taxes on the value of their standing timber. The industry hasn't paid taxes on private standing timber, valued at approximately \$40 billion, since then. By 2003-2005, that "standing timber tax exclusion" was valued at \$511 million per biennium.

A timber harvest privilege tax was passed in 1977 that generated \$30 million to \$68 million per year in state tax revenues. But in 1999, even that modest harvest tax was deleted for timberland owners with holdings of more than 5,000 acres, thanks to Gov. John Kitzhaber

## Upcoming Events

Car Seat Clinic - Saturday, October 17, 10:00 am - 12:30 pm at Vernonia Fire Station, 555 E. Bridge Street. 503-556-3736

Recognizing Child Molesters - Thursday, October 22, 6:30 pm at the Cabin in Vernonia, 901 Park Dr. Presented by Washington County Sheriffs Office Child Sex Abuse Detectives.

Halloween Sidewalk Parade - Saturday, October 31, 4:00 pm for trick-or-treat aged kids. Line up at 3:30. Loop will start at City Hall.

and the Oregon Legislature through the passage of House Bill 3575.

In 2008 there was a \$182 million tax break for Weyerhaeuser, tucked inside the farm bill, which would reduce Weyerhaeuser and some small timber companies' tax rate from 35 percent to about 17 percent. Weyerhaeuser takes from Oregon's coffers and still wants more from the public.

This is what hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts put into Oregon's coffers: Hunters in Oregon spend over \$238 million on lodging, food, gas and gear while paying over \$27 million in state taxes. On the average, a hunter will spend about \$1,200 per season to hunt. Among the millions who enjoy Oregon's great outdoors, hunters create a \$12.8 billion per year industry and 141,000 jobs, which is \$4 billion in wages and \$955 million in state and local taxes.

Oregon needs to do away with tax breaks, loopholes and publicly funded logging road building if Weyerhaeuser continues to prohibit general public access to their land. If that's the case, then Weyerhaeuser should receive no tax breaks or public funds to run their corporate business. We need to change this unfair practice by Weyerhaeuser, and by asking our representatives, state senators and governor to step in on behalf of the citizens to ensure access to forestlands. They need to stand up against Weyerhaeuser and start legislation to remove the huge tax breaks unless Weyerhaeuser becomes a good community citizen.

Tammy Maygra,  
Dee Island

Vernonia's Voice is published twice each month on the 1st and 3rd Thursday. Our next issue will be out November 5th.

| Vernonia Weather September 2015 |      |      |        |
|---------------------------------|------|------|--------|
| DATE                            | HIGH | LOW  | PRECIP |
| 1                               | 71   | 51   | .10    |
| 2                               | 68   | 44   | .08    |
| 3                               | 65   | 40   | .28    |
| 4                               | 64   | 41   | 0      |
| 5                               | 68   | 39   | .02    |
| 6                               | 62   | 42   | T      |
| 7                               | 73   | 49   | T      |
| 8                               | 73   | 45   | 0      |
| 9                               | 78   | 49   | 0      |
| 10                              | 84   | 46   | 0      |
| 11                              | 92   | 48   | 0      |
| 12                              | 87   | 53   | 0      |
| 13                              | 69   | 41   | 0      |
| 14                              | 62   | 37   | 0      |
| 15                              | 61   | 49   | T      |
| 16                              | 68   | 52   | .18    |
| 17                              | 66   | 47   | .07    |
| 18                              | 73   | 45   | 0      |
| 19                              | 71   | 45   | 0      |
| 20                              | 76   | 50   | .04    |
| 21                              | 65   | 36   | T      |
| 22                              | 67   | 33   | 0      |
| 23                              | 71   | 39   | 0      |
| 24                              | 77   | 54   | .14    |
| 25                              | 58   | 52   | 0      |
| 26                              | 64   | 37   | 0      |
| 27                              | 67   | 29   | 0      |
| 28                              | 78   | 28   | 0      |
| 29                              | 81   | 47   | 0      |
| 30                              | 70   | 44   | 0      |
| Ave/Tot                         | 71.0 | 43.7 | 0.91   |

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

The Rusty Nail  
805 Bridge Street  
Vernonia OR 97064  
Hours  
Mon-Sat 10-5  
Sun 10-3

This coupon is good for 10% off your entire purchase during October 2015.

## Columbia Humane Society Featured Pet

Pappy came to CHS as an owner surrender, due to the fact that the family was moving to Mexico. They had originally brought him in because they wanted him to be put to sleep. After evaluation we found that Pappy is a very nice guy that seems to get along with other dogs. He is both friendly and playful. He is going to need someone who is willing to do a little leash work and training with him, as he finds everything so fun all the time. He isn't sure what his limitations are. He also doesn't seem to be reactive to cats. His adoption fee of \$165.00 includes all his vaccines, his neuter and microchip. Please don't hesitate to give us a call if you have any questions.

Web: [www.columbiahumane.org](http://www.columbiahumane.org)  
2084 Oregon Street  
Phone: 503-397-4353

### 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](mailto:scott@vernoniasvoice.com) or mail to: Letters, PO Box 55, Vernonia, OR 97064.