

## UNWC Hosts Speaker on Oregon Forest Practices

**Oregon Wild's Jason Gonzales wants to protect Oregonians with stronger regulations in the logging industry**

By Scott Laird

The Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC) hosted a free presentation by Jason Gonzales, a community and campaign organizer with Oregon Wild. The presentation, which was open



to the public and was attended by over 25 people, focused on logging policies and Oregon's Forest Practices Act (OFPA). Gonzales said Oregon's logging laws are considered the weakest in the region. His presentation focused on three significant issues – current logging practices that damage streams and rivers, the impacts of aerial spraying, and carbon storage and climate change. He said stronger forest protections are good for communities, drinking water, and carbon sequestration.

Gonzales' presentation took a practical but forceful approach, grounded in a broad knowledge of industrial logging practices and their impacts. He cited numerous scientific studies in making his points, but was also very pragmatic about the importance of the timber industry in Oregon's economy and realistic about its impact on the environment.

"There are other uses of our land that are also harming our drinking water and poisoning our air," he said. "I happen to work in forests. I think it's beneficial for Oregon to keep a lot of this landscape as working forests. But for the past 80 years it's been overdone and what we've been left with is a landscape that is degraded."

In Oregon about 40% of forestland is owned by logging corporations, private families, the State of Oregon, counties, and tribes. Those lands fall under the jurisdiction of the OFPA, first passed in 1972. Since then the OFPA has received only minor updates and revisions and has not taken into account new scientific studies about how logging impacts water quality and stream flows, wildlife and

fish populations, and carbon storage. Washington, California, and Idaho all have stronger environmental protections to safeguard their states against harmful logging practices.

Oregon Wild, a statewide non-profit formerly known as the Oregon Natural Resources Council, has been working in Oregon on a number of environmental and conservation issues for over 25 years. They have helped protect Oregon's wildlife and old growth forests, assisted in passing legislation to establish more wilderness area in Oregon, worked to help designate a portion of the Nehalem River as a State Scenic Waterway, and helped organize communities to protect their right to clean drinking water and notification about the aerial spraying of harmful herbicides near them.

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## Council Approves Rate Reduction

**Recommendation for \$22.66 reduction added to budget proposal**

After months of speculation, a large reduction to the city utility rate is one step closer to becoming a reality for Vernonia citizens.

The City Council voted on April 1 (No, this was not a prank!) to approve a recommendation from the Rate Review Committee which would lower water and sewer rates by \$22.66. The vote authorizes city staff to include the new rate as part of the proposed budget, which the Council will begin discussing next week. If included in the final budget, the new rate will take effect on July 1, 2019.

The Rate Review Committee has been meeting during the last several years prior to starting the budget process in order to examine current rates and make adjustments as needed to ensure the city is collecting the proper funds needed to operate the system. The Review Committee considers data

on usage, number of customers, costs to operate the system, and needed reserves.

Last year the Rate Reduction Review led to a smaller reduction in city utility rates of \$5.

The City recently paid off a sewer loan which was costing rate payers about \$22 per month. The Rate Review Committee also recommended a decrease of \$1.20 to the water base rate, and slight increases to the water repayment fee (\$0.30), sewer base rate (\$0.25), and sewer consumption rate (\$0.15). The overall recommended net reduction is \$22.66.

The rate reduction is the culmination of years of work by several City Administrators, past and current City Council members, members of the citizen Public Works Committee, and City staff. A dedicated effort by City officials and citizens to examine rates using real data has given the City the ability to tightly manage funds and payoff several loans early.

## Painter Case Ends in Guilty Plea

A painful and tragic ordeal for the Rainier community and the family of fallen Rainier Police Chief Ralph Painter has finally reached a conclusion after eight long years.

Daniel Butts, in court for a plea hearing on March 26, 2019, pleaded guilty to Aggravated Murder for intentionally causing the death of Rainier Police Chief Ralph Painter on January 5, 2011 in Rainier. Butts also pled guilty to intentionally attempting to kill former Clatskanie Police Chief Marvin Hoover, and a civilian witness who was attempting to provide aid to Painter, during the



same incident.

Columbia County District Attorney Jeff Auxier announced the plea agreement, which sentenced Butts to life in prison with the chance for parole after 40 years. The agreement guarantees that Butts will not be eligible for early release and will only be qualified to apply for parole, which must then be approved, if he reaches the age of 70.

Butts, 29 of Kalama, Washington, will be in the custody of the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC), but will serve his sentence at the Oregon State Hospital until he is deemed fit to

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## Racism in Oregon: An Egregious History

**Part I: Oregon has a long and ugly legacy of racism that reaches back to the first days of its settlement**

By Scott Laird

In 1844 George Washington Bush joined a party of friends and neighbors from Missouri and traveled the Oregon Trail heading west. Bush was in search of a better life and more opportunities for his family, including his five sons, in the expansive Oregon Territory, which included what is now Washington, Idaho, and parts of Wyoming and Montana. Bush and his party were among the first large wagon trains to head for the Willamette Valley. Tales of Oregon's fertile farmland had been drifting back east for several years.

Bush was educated by Quakers in Philadelphia as a young man and joined the U.S. Army to fight in the War

of 1812, serving under General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans. He had previously traveled west in the 1820s, working as a voyageur for the Hudson's Bay Company transporting goods and passengers between trading posts, before settling in Missouri where he became a wealthy and successful farmer. His Missouri neighbors respected him and encouraged him to join their westward trek thinking his prior experiences and knowledge about the region would be useful.

Bush and his small party joined a wagon train of 74 wagons, led by Cornelius Gilliam, departing from Independence, Missouri in May of 1844, like hundreds of thousands of other emigrants would in the following decades. Bush carried seeds and trees, farming implements, and herds of stock on the trip, even helping to fund the supplies of several families in his party. During their trip west, the party experienced

the usual hardships, including rivers swollen by heavy rains, and several families in the party ran short of provisions; Bush helped at least 20 families during the trip with his own money and supplies.

After traveling 2,000 miles the party reached The Dalles on the Columbia River in the Oregon Territory to find an unexpected and deeply disturbing truth... Bush would not be allowed to settle in Oregon with his neighbors and traveling companions. The previous year Oregon Territory citizens had barred Negroes from settling there. And George Washington Bush was black.

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Oregon's shameful history of early racism is not something most Oregonians want to look at, and certainly not discuss openly. That racist heritage has been covered up and left out of most text books and history lessons.

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