

Vernonia SK8 Update

The Vernonia SK8 Committee is currently waiting for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) to review the grant application for the Vernonia Skate Park. The OPRD grant budget is based on lottery dollars which is typically obtained in the August time frame with awards given in September. According to OPRD, they have not received the grant budget dollars yet due to COVID-19 so they are on hold as well.

As a reminder, Vernonia SK8 is asking for a 6,000 square foot skate park which will cost approximately \$200,000 for the basics. Thanks to the Vernonia community, they have nearly \$50,000 in cash along with \$25,000 from the Tony Hawk Foundation! They have a \$7,000 in-kind pledge from Javoss for site prep, along

with skate park concept drawings from skate park builders Spohn Ranch and Evergreen Skate Park, both worth \$6,000 each. The City of Vernonia will hold \$20,000 towards the skate park once the OPRD grant is received and will also donate \$10,000 towards permitting and drainage. This brings a local total contribution of \$124,000 towards the skate park.

The SK8 Park Committee is still raising funds because every penny will go towards special elements of the skate park. They would love to provide tables/chairs for picnics so parents can watch; shade sails for the skaters so they don't get sunburned; helmets and pads for those that need it; and more! Please visit <http://vernoniask8.webflow.io> for ways to donate and to stay up to date!

November 3, 2020 Election Information

There are many important races in this year's elections, including several local elections, for two Vernonia City Council seats and Mayor, two seats on the Columbia County Board of Commissioners, and for State Representative for District 31.

Starting on page 7 in this issue you will find our Candidate Questionnaire and Responses for these four local races. Also, please take a look at our Readers Lend Their Voices section, starting on page 4. Many people have taken time to submit Letters to the Editor with their views on specific candidates and races. Hopefully you will find these two resources helpful when you sit down to fill out your ballot this year.

What should you do if you see someone interfering with a ballot box or your right to vote?

- document what you see
- call Election Protection at 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683)

The following is relevant information for Columbia County voters and the November 3 election:

Ballot Drop Box update – Outside 24 hour accessible ballot boxes have been installed at

Rainier City Hall, Vernonia Public Library, and Clatskanie Library and are in the process of having decals applied. These boxes will be marked, unlocked and accessible on October 15.

Ballot mailing – Ballots will mail to the county at large Wednesday, October 14. Expect to see your ballot anywhere from the Thursday the 15 to Monday the 19.

Voter registration – New Voter registration deadline was October 13.

Voter's Pamphlet and Voter's Pamphlet corrections – The Voter's Pamphlet has been delivered to households the week of 10/5-10/9. If you have not received one, you can find one at your local post office and digital copies can be found online.

There are several corrections to the Columbia County portion of the Voter's Pamphlet:

- Page 5, column 1: Alex Tardiff should be spelled Alex Tardif
- Page 11, column 2: Jake Carter is a candidate for Columbia River PUD sub 4, not Clatskanie PUD
- Page 16: There is a reference to "applying postage" to your return envelope. This is no longer the case and return postage is prepaid.

The Timber Industry of Today Part 5: A Visit to a Family Owned Tree Farm

By Scott Laird

Over the last several months I've written about the timber industry in Oregon from a number of different perspectives. I've had the opportunity to learn about and talk with many people who work in and care deeply about Oregon's forests. In this, our final installment in this series, we visit a small, local family owned tree farm.

Dick Courter grew up on a family farm in Illinois that had a small woodlot as part of the property. The woodlot contained some very nice white

oak trees, along with some good walnut trees. Courter's father loved walnut wood – he absolutely adored it, Courter says as he tells this story. His father planned to use some of the white oak to build a corn crib, so he hired a logger to come in and cut some of it. Courter says he was just six or seven years old at the time, and remembered his father explicitly telling the logger not to take out any of the walnut. "I was out in the barn yard one day and saw a load of walnut driving off the property, headed for the mill," he remembers, "so I ran and found my father and told him what I saw. I've never seen my dad so mad in his life as that day."

At the mill they had already started to cut the walnut into lumber, "and it was already cut off the stump and he couldn't do anything about it," adds Courter, so his father made a deal with the mill to cut the walnut and they would share the lumber 50/50 – that's how mills operate, the owner of the wood got half and the mill got half. "Well, if you know anything about walnut, it has a lot of white wood on the outside, it's not all that dark wood like we think walnut should be," explains Courter. "So which 50% of the wood did my dad get? They gave him all the white wood. And that's why, when I got interested in forestry as a career, I wanted to work with small forest landowners and with families to keep that kind of thing from happening to them."

A small, family tree farm

I meet Dick Courter just inside the gate of the Nehalem Tree Farm, the family owned property he manages



Recently harvested timber on the Nehalem Tree Farm

near Vernonia, just a few miles down Timber Road from the Highway 47 split. I had visited the property last summer at Courter's invitation; he was hosting a tour for the Oregon Small Woodlands Association, which he is deeply involved in, and had invited me to take part. On that tour there were about 100 people, but this time it was just Courter and myself. It was a beautiful early October morning, still crisp and cool when I arrived, but sunny and quickly warming. A few days before my visit Courter had told me Mike Pihl Logging was on the property doing some work and we might get to see some trees being cut, but when I arrived he said a piece of machinery had broken down and the operator had gone looking for parts.

Courter says he initially enrolled at the University of Illinois to study ar-

chitecture, "because I had a lot of interest in wood and building," but became disillusioned with the program after the first semester, and switched to the School of Forestry. After earning a BA in Forest Management he went to work for Crown Zellerbach, assigned to field research.

In 1978 he started his own forestry consulting business, GeneTech, where he mostly works with small, family owned forest property owners. When he and his wife Gayanne, who was from Portland, were looking for a place to live, she said she needed to live near the city, and farm boy Dick said he needed some land. Gayanne found them the perfect property, 13 acres on Skyline Boulevard at Cornell Road in Portland, where they still live and operate their 10 acre Skyline U-Cut Christmas Tree Farm.

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