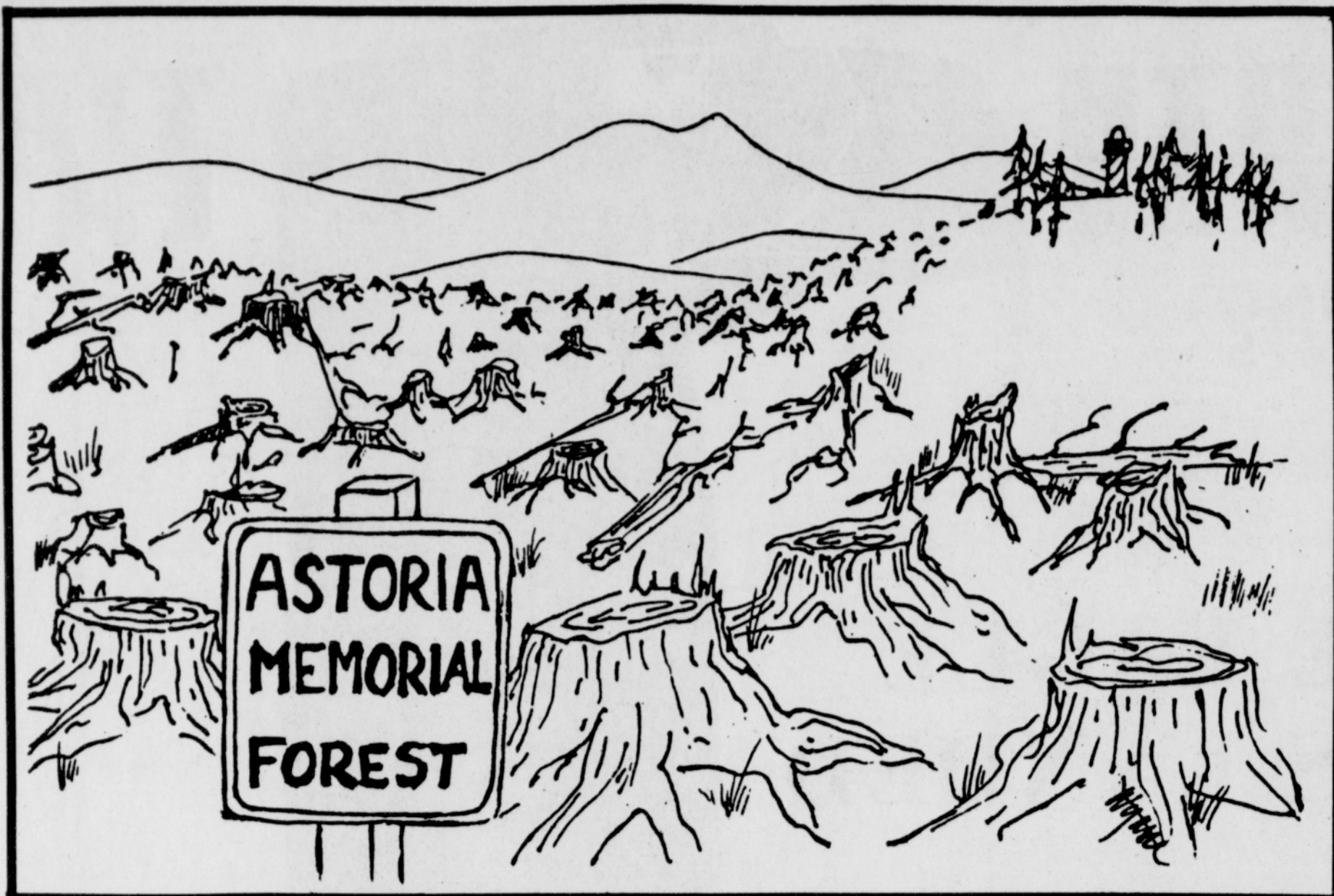




RACHEL WYNNE

CLEARCUTTING ASTORIA'S FOREST

by Howard Bruner

I recently resigned my seat of the Astoria City Forest Management Taskforce. The reason was not a lack of interest. On the contrary, I am deeply interested and intend to keep actively working on the future of our urban forests. My resignation comes after much inner debate.

The Taskforce was formed as a placebo last year to mute the public outcry over the Astoria City Council's decision to permit limited clearcutting of its city forest. I have done my best to participate with the committee while keeping in mind the guidelines we were given by the city council. These guidelines were to explore the variety of alternative uses of these lands to include but not limited to: recreational, aesthetic, tourism, financial, housing, development, and streets. I feel the committee has focused on two of these considerations to the detriment of all others. By not considering other options the committee has become ineffectual. These are serious allegations, but consider the following:

When receiving our initial instructions from city manager Jim Flint, he stressed that any reasonable request for resources to help in our task would be provided. Several requests

for consultants with knowledge of the tourism and recreational potential of these lands were never satisfied. A comprehensive census of the natural assets of our forests was likewise not provided. (Flint has since accepted a job as county manager of Los Alamos, New Mexico.)

Surveys asking city residents their preferences concerning urban forest management were repeatedly requested, debated and turned down as not valid sources of information. Likewise surveys targeting those people living near the forest acreage and directly impacted by the committee's recommendations.

The only reference material that was specific to those areas in question and generated by the city was its Timber Management Plan. This plan is basically a timber cruise which also incorporates soil information and growth patterns as they relate to clearcut harvest of all tracts excepting Tract "C" and portions of others. When confronted with debatable choices the impacts of our recommendations were always measured against this one interpretation of worth.

When an extra effort was made on my part to attend an Alder workshop presented by Oregon State University, my report on the infor-

mation gathered was of so little interest to the committee that it was not included in the minutes. It was necessary to call Jim Flint and have the Alder workshop situation included in an addition to the minutes.

The committee has refused to explore the possibility of all parcels being united and considered as a unit. Certain uses are dependant upon this concept of the urban forest as an integral holding. Instead the committee proceeds with a parcel by parcel cutting schedule.

I joined the urban forest taskforce in order to study the options, gather all possible facts and use them to make informed, responsible recommendations to the Astoria City Council. I leave with no small amount of hesitation, for it is just such a committee that could have produced enlightened guidance. Sadly, what the council and citizens of Astoria will receive are uninformed preferences by a well meaning group handicapped by a flawed process.

Howard Bruner is an Astoria resident who has long been involved in environmental and wildlife issues.

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