

WILLAPA BAY

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without introduction, just as they would at home. Talk revolved around boats and gear; work and jokes -- an easy camaraderie born of shared experience. Bay Center isn't the biggest knot of maritime activity on the Willapa, but it has the feeling of importance greater than its size. It sticks out into the bay at the mouth of the Palix River, east across the water from Leadbetter Point, the northern terminal of the Long Beach Peninsula. It was a Native American village before white settlers arrived.

Things looked bleak after 1919, when the native oysters all but disappeared. Ownership of oyster beds defaulted to the state. Virginia oysters were tried. They never felt at home here, but the Atlantic grass in which they were packed has done all too well. *Spartina alterniflora* maintained a tenuous toehold until the 1960s, then -- one of those red flags from nature -- it began to spread exponentially, threatening to take over mudflats and alter the ecology of the bay.

With the introduction of the Pacific oyster culture Japan Willapa again became an important procurer. It now produces half the oysters from Washington State, but not without complications. The old ecological truism that you can't change just one thing in a system is nowhere more apparent than in an estuary.

Two kinds of burrowing shrimp are native to Willapa. In the 1950s their density inexplicably burgeoned until their burrows softened the bottom, causing oysters to sink into the mud and die. Oyster growers countered by applying carbaryl, which killed the burrowing shrimp, but also commercially valuable crabs. Meanwhile, the timber industry began extensive clearcutting on the watershed, following with defoliants and fertilizers to hurry along the new generation of "supertrees." The increased load of sediment and chemicals work their way downstream and end up in the bay. Meanwhile spartina continues to spread, and calls for the use of chemicals to help control it sparked protest. Clashes between crab and salmon fishermen, oystergrowers, industrial timberland owners, farmers, developers, Shoalwater Indians, and environmentalists of various stripes increased. As they say in cattle country, things were getting real western.

Dick Wilson, owner of Bay Center Mariculture, was an early advocate of getting everyone to the table. With encouragement from Eco Trust and The Nature Conservancy a consortium of conservationists and resource-dependent industries was born. The Willapa Alliance is pledged to "sustainable development," a concept to which all parties can subscribe. It is

an idea uneasily related to "ecosystem management," a phrase intended to evoke a sense of adherence to fundamental principle. What does it really mean? I asked Dick how he would respond if eco-system management led in the direction of restoring preindustrial conditions to Willapa. "There aren't going to be shoals of oysters anymore," he replied flatly. "We have been at this long enough to know the best way to do it." Some natural propagation goes on in the bay. There are even remnants of *O. lurida* surviving, but oysters are an industry and ooze is valuable real estate. The vagaries of natural propagation have been replaced by artificial culture. Wilson is not impervious to the enchantment of the natural ecology of the estuary but he has a businessman's sense of priorities: "People have to make a living before they get philosophical about their place in nature."

You don't go through Bay Center on the way to somewhere else. You drive the winding road off 101, with the Palix River on one side and diked pasture on the other. Herons and an occasional egret stalk the shallow waters, hawks watch from the alders lining the road. Some of the people who live here seem to me to have something that is gone from modern life, a

SAVE OUR ANCIENT FORESTS & SALVAGE DEMOCRACY

Our national forests are once again being opened up for cutting. The last of our precious forests and primary ecosystems are under assault by the 104th Congress. On July 27, 1995, a salvage timber rider was passed that suspends all environmental laws which apply to logging on public lands. This rider was forced through as an amendment on a spending bill; it has had no meaningful public debate. All previous court decisions to protect our forests have been overruled by this rider. This is only the first of many anti-environmental riders planned by Congress. Not only is this an assault on Ancient Forests, it is an assault on the basic principles of democracy.

The actual wording of the salvage rider states, "the removal of disease- or insect-infested trees, dead, damaged, or down trees, or trees affected by fire or imminently susceptible to fire or insect attack. Such term also includes the removal of associated trees..." As a result, healthy ecosystems are being sold for cutting under the guise of "salvage." In addition, the concept of salvage is a false one. Scientific study shows that managing the forest by continued logging and road building does not improve its health; the forest contains a natural balance of life and death already. Many of the areas now scheduled to be cut were, in the past, protected as critical habitat because they are the last of unique and pristine ecosystems. We cannot afford to lose them.

Economically speaking, salvage logging is not profitable. According to the General Accounting Office audit over the last three years, the U.S. Forest Service has spent \$1 billion more on logging our National Forests than the timber sales earned for the federal treasury. Section 6c of the salvage rider reads, "Cost considerations -- Salvage timber sales undertaken pursuant to this section shall not be precluded because the costs of such activities are likely to exceed the revenues derived from such activities."

This "lawless logging" has met with strong national and grassroots opposition. Over 130 environmental groups signed a letter which calls on President Clinton to repeal this unjust rider. In

the Pacific Northwest, home of our country's last stands of old-growth forests and primary ecosystems, thousands of citizens have protested and hundreds, from all walks of life, have been arrested over the past few months.

One incredible effort has come from Tim Ream who has been on a hunger strike since October 3. Tim has been camped in a tent in front of the Eugene (Oregon) Federal Building and has taken in no solid food, only juice and broth. He is calling on an immediate moratorium on all cutting of ancient public forests until such time as there is a Congressional vote on the salvage logging rider as a single issue with open and unimpeded debate. This ongoing effort has brought much awareness to "lawless logging" and has acted as a reminder of our consumption patterns and how they affect our environment.

In fact, every action that we take makes a difference. Now is the time to show our commitment to the environment and our awareness of the undemocratic actions being taken by Congress.

We must join together as a national community of concerned citizens. Please join the ongoing efforts to protect our Ancient Forests and maintain our basic principles of democracy.

What you can do:

- Call President Clinton today at (202) 456-1111 and demand a repeal of the salvage rider.
- Join Tim each Tuesday to Wednesday (noon to noon) for a one day fast in protest of lawless logging.
- Be part of the National Day of Fasting for Environmental Rights on Tuesday, January 9, 1996.

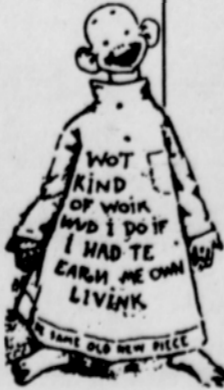
—JEANNE PATTON

Jeanne Patton lives in Portland. For further information call her at (503) 233-1139.



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