

County requests Alder Creek probe

OREGON CITY — The Clackamas County Commissioners Thursday voted 2-1 to request a Oregon State Health Division investigation of alleged health hazards in five water systems in the Mount Hood corridor.

The decision followed more than two hours of sometimes heated testimony from Gerald "Red" Bennett of Portland, owner of Alder Creek Water Company, which owns the five water systems, and Gene Ginther, acting receiver of the water company since September.

Commissioner Stan Skoko cast the sole no vote, saying that testimony presented "no concrete evidence showing that there is a health hazard" and was comprised largely of "conjectures on the part of persons testifying."

The Alder Creek-Barlow, Alder Creek-Riverside, Country Club, Wildwood Annex and Sleepy Hollow water systems were placed in receivership by U.S. District Judge Gus Solomon in September, following two years of efforts by the Environmental Protection Agency and the state

Health Division to require Bennett to upgrade his water systems.

A study conducted on the water systems by the was the thrust of testimony presented to commissioners Thursday by Ginther, a county health EPA and the U.S. Public Health Service in August found the presence of pathogens with the potential "to cause...intermittent diarrhea, if not a true systemic infection, in the community served," according to a micro-biologist's affidavit. That division representative and state health division officials.

Bennett, however, told commissioners that the tests were not conclusive.

"There's a hell of a lot of innuendo here," Bennett said. "All the tests that the county has on record have always found the proper amount of chlorine in (the systems). I'd love them to challenge me on this."

Bennett called the water systems "reasonably safe," saying that health hazards exist "in any

system." EPA and state Health Division evidence is "more than countered by the preponderance of tests we have (conducted) that show (the other evidence) is not true," he said. "There's no precedent for this...what they've done is undoubtedly illegal."

Bennett requested a delay in requesting the investigation, "so we can go out and come back with something to counter this innuendo and crap."

"I believe there may be a health hazard and I think it needs to go before the appropriate body," said Commissioner Ralph Groener, voting in favor of the investigation. "I believe it's my responsibility to do this."

Commissioner Bob Schumacher agreed with Groener, telling Bennett that "if they find no health hazards, you have nothing to worry about."

Commissioner Skoko voted against the investigation request, saying he was "disgusted" with the testimony. "I haven't been shown that a health hazard exists," he said.

Livestock grazing cheaper

Grazing livestock on Bureau of Land Management administered lands, will be slightly cheaper for ranchers this year.

The 1981 grazing fee will be \$2.31 per animal unit month (AUM), a drop of five cents from last year's level. The new rate is effective March 1. An AUM is the amount of forage one cow will eat during a month. Grazing fees are based on a formula contained in the 1978 Public Rangelands Improvement Act and accounts for beef cattle prices, production costs, and prices paid. This is the first decrease in grazing fees under the formula, and is due mostly from a downturn in beef cattle prices.

In Oregon and Washington, there were about 2,000 operators who grazed more than 250,000 animals on

public land last year. Fifty percent of the fees collected within grazing districts is used to finance range improvement practices. Another 37.5 percent is sent to the United States Treasury, with the final 12.5 percent being allotted to the counties.

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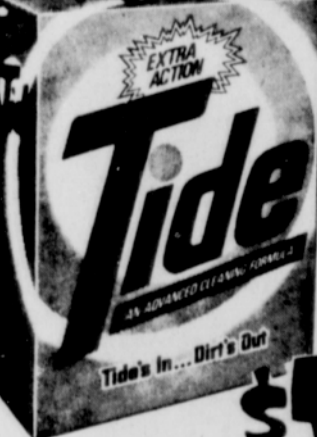
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