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Landfill problems being investigated by county

by MICHAEL P. JONES
Post Correspondent

Since spring, residents along the Sandy and Zigzag rivers have complained about fill material, which they claim will impact the natural resources and future environment, being dumped into the rivers' floodplains.

The two prominent fills, located behind Hoodland Construction Co. and the Mt. Hood Lions Club in Wemme and behind the service station in Rhododendron, contain dirt, stumps and sod which witnesses claim comes from the excavation site of the new Hoodland Service District's sewage treatment plant.

According to Greg Hessler, a resident near the site at Wemme, "It has been a tremendous landfill that has been in the process of being filled for the last three

years." He said that its use has been increased as a dumping since for "dirt and garbage since last fall."

Hessler said he has observed large quantities of cement, tires, mattresses, oil filters and old metal being covered with dirt, rock and cement.

He said the Wemme fill particularly bothered him because it interfered with a creek that flows almost all year. He added that dumping has either destroyed or severely disturbed the water-loving plants which play a major role in the ecology of the floodplain area.

"I've seen Great Blue Herons inhabiting the area over the years, as well as beaver and deer. But now, I'm afraid this swampy area that has been used by the wildlife for so long, has been severely impaired. And why? To make more land for people," Hessler said.

Approximately 1,300 yards of fill material has been dumped over the embankment at the Wemme site on property owned by William Steinberger, of the Hoodland Construction Co., and the Mt. Hood Lions Club. It also covers an "unvacated" Clackamas County road.

Evidence exists that erosion of the bank has littered it with pieces of asphalt, old gasoline cans and concrete. A large one-ton drain tile lays in the middle of the now-shallow creek.

Nearly 12,000 yards of fill material has been dumped on the floodplain of the Zigzag River at Rhododendron on property which tax records show is being purchased by Steven Sweitzer of Hoodland and Norman Swan of Gresham. The fill also extends on to the property of the Snowline Motel.

According to Dominic Mancini, Clackamas County planning director, such fills would require a "floodplain

development" permit. None are on file for the two locations.

July 16, this reporter accompanied Walter Cate of the Code Compliance Division on a site visit to the fills. Two additional fills were discovered, as well as possible locations near Lolo Pass Road, Miller Road and the Salmon River Road.

Cate identified another fill at the junction of Highway 26 and Grouse Lane, owned by Ray Thornberg, which he estimated to be more than 600 yards.

Cate said, "Of all the fills, the one that will cause the least environmental problems is the Thornberg fill. They need to get a grading permit," he said, "and then solve the water problems since it's in a seasonal drainage area."

The landfill site at Wemme, Cate said, shouldn't present much of a problem "after they've taken out the garbage, debris and organic fill, and com-

packed it."

He said that since it is a broad floodplain, it can be properly dealt with.

The Rhododendron fill is "different story," Cate said, because it is filled down on a bench on the river's northern bank. "This fill has the greatest potential for environmental damage," he said.

"If there is a problem with dirt going down the river," he said, "it's with this fill. The Zigzag has high water fluctuations. It's a small stream and that means problems."

Jay Massey, District fish biologist for the Department of Fish and Wildlife, echoed Cate's concerns. He said his office will study the potential impact of fill on the stream's fish habitat which could be affected when the dirt erodes.

Property owner Sweitzer said he didn't know that there as anything

wrong. He said he had given permission to the Hoodland Service District to dump dirt from its sewage treatment plant, but "wasn't aware that it would be this much."

"It's happened. That's all I can say now," said Sweitzer. "There's nothing I can do about it now, except shut it off. I'll just have to stop them from dumping and deal with it."

Cate said he has notified Steinberger, Sweitzer, Thornberg and the Lions Club that they have 30 days to get the necessary permits and comply with county and state ordinances regarding filling and grading in floodplain areas.

He said the Army Corps of Engineers may be needed to help with ripping the newly-formed banks along the property at Rhododendron to minimize any environmental damage. The other sites, he said, can be corrected "with some work."

House bill would allow county money

A bill amendment that would allow Clackamas County to levy its entire \$2.3 million sheriff's 'A' levy has been approved by the House Revenue Committee.

The amendment, which would allow property tax levy elections in certain cases when taxing districts have made technical errors in calculating levy amounts, now depends on eventual passage of HB 2175. The bill modifies the 'A' and 'B' ballots system adopted by the 1979 Legislature.

The county over-estimated the size of its 'A' levy last year when it was forced to use its own population projections to calculate it. It received official estimates from the state Department of Revenue in December, a month after the 'A' levy had been approved by voters.

According to state officials, \$365,000 should not have been included in the 'A' levy and is not eligible for its homeowners' property tax relief program. That sum should have been included in the county's \$4.7 million 'B' levy, passed by voters in February, they said.

Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer's office has indicated informally that the county will probably not be able to levy the \$365,000, according to existing state law, said Carole Berggren, county budget analyst. Either a new law or special election may be required.

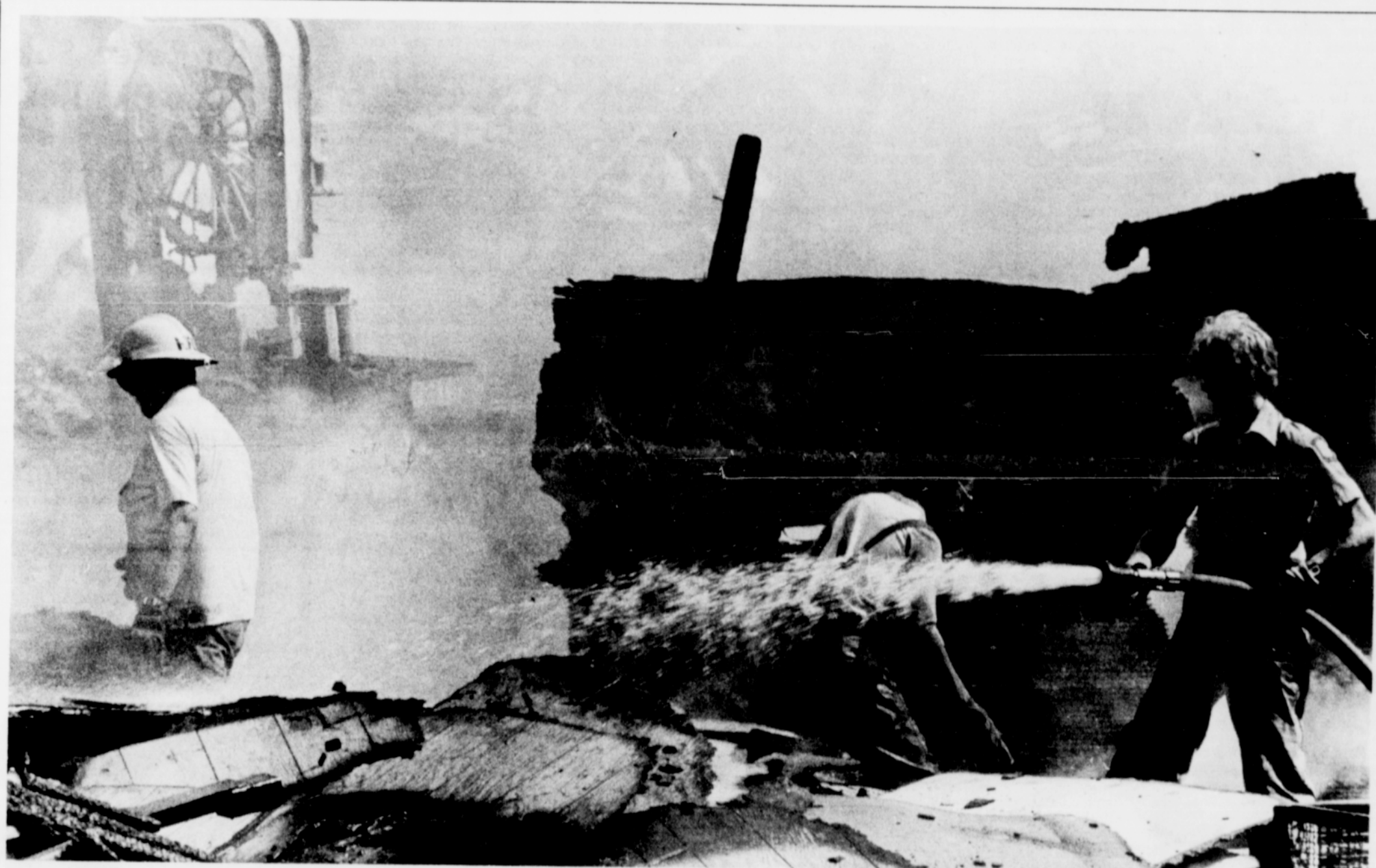
County commissioners have cried foul play, because both the Department of Revenue and the attorney general's office approved the county's estimates before the November 1980 election. They have vowed to fight the issue in tax court if the crisis cannot be resolved.

The amendment approved last Tuesday by the House Revenue Committee would allow the county to levy the \$365,000, but it would probably be considered part of the 'B' levy, according to a tax analyst for the Legislature. That would mean the sum isn't eligible for state property tax relief, but analysts estimate that homeowners will pay only an additional 1.7 cents per \$1,000 valuation.

HB 2175 is expected to reach the House for a vote sometime this week. Rep. Ed Lindquist, D-Gladstone, introduced the amendment to the committee last Saturday.

While the amendment received majority support from the committee, the bill contains some controversial material which may slow its progress through the Legislature, according to Joyce Thorbeck, legislative assistant to Lindquist.

If the bill does not pass, the county may have to ask voters in September to approve a \$365,000 — money it thought it already had.



Firefighters from the Boring Fire District continued mopping up at Reedway Manufacturing Co. throughout the day Tuesday following an early-morning blaze which extensively damaged the plant. Photo by Dan Dillon

Early-morning blaze damages Orient Drive sawmill

by DAN DILLON

A three-alarm blaze early Tuesday morning nearly destroyed the Reedway Manufacturing Co.'s sawmill and lumber yard at 15370 S.E. Orient Drive.

Bob Rykken, assistant fire chief for the Boring Fire District, said the 1:48 a.m. fire created an "unofficial" loss of approximately \$100,000. "I don't know how many

board feet of lumber they lost," he said. The sawmill collapsed in the flames.

Rykken said the fire was reported by a passerby and by the time the first firefighters arrived on the scene, the sawmill was totally involved in flames. Eighty-three firefighters from six fire districts battled the blaze for nearly two hours before it was contained. The last firefighters from the Boring

Fire District cleared the scene at approximately 3:15 p.m. Tuesday.

The biggest problem, according to Rykken, was the delay in the beginning of the fire and the time it was phoned in. "When we got there, all we could do was control it from spreading," he said. "If it had been the afternoon, with an east wind, we would have had a real problem."

The stillness of the night air, however, was an asset in fighting the

fire.

With water in short supply at the scene, seven tankers hauled water to the scene from Sandy's Industrial Park where engines were hooked up to hydrants to fill empty tankers.

Flames from the fire were visible up to 15 miles away. "The guys took a heck of a beating that were up there on the front line," Rykken said.

One Boring firefighter, Rick

Hagar, was treated for smoke inhalation at Gresham Community Hospital and released.

Seventeen pieces of apparatus were used in the battle against the flames. Called in to assist the Boring Fire District were firefighters from the Sandy, Hoodland, Estacada, Happy Valley and Multnomah County No. 10 fire districts. Clackamas County Fire District 71 stood by at the Boring main station.

Hydro project controversy heading to negotiation

by MICHAEL P. JONES
Post Correspondent

The Clackamas County Planning Commission last week ruled that the Boulder Creek hydro-electric project hearing was illegal due to improper notification of adjacent property owners.

Gary Naylor, Clackamas County planner, said last Thursday that his office had been notified July 22 at 2:30 p.m. by a "Doctor Holman," who complained of not receiving a hearing notice. A check of the records revealed that possibly three other lot owners were not notified.

"Notification of property owners for a hearing is a very vital part of the system," Naylor said. "It's very mechanical and repetitious, but yet important to those living within 250 feet of the said property."

Naylor added that another recent hearing, involving a 192-unit mobile

home subdivision at Brightwood, had also been ruled illegal due to improper notification.

That meeting was postponed after it was learned that Bob and Judy Decker of Mt. Country Lane had not received notification. It was also discovered that those property owners who were notified, had not received their notice within the 20-day time period required by Clackamas County ordinance.

Greg Fritz of the planning department blamed the problems on a computer at the time. Naylor said, however, the problem was human error.

Martha Torson, a resident of Country Club Lane who has played an active role in the Boulder Creek hydro-electric controversy, said, "It seemed like they were grasping for time because we really surprised them with all our people and evidence against the project."

She added that she and the Environmental Committee on Suitability (ECOS) will "fight on" because "they want all the mountain residents to realize that we need to preserve this last refuge outside the city for all people to enjoy."

"We're in the same spot as the wildlife who loves the wilderness and untamed land," she said. "We're gradually just getting pushed off of it. But not after a fight."

The hydro-electric plant's developer, Steven Sweitzer, takes a different tack. "Somewhere along the line, someone has to think practical," he said. "If we can't have nuclear or coal power, and it we can't even have small hydro plants, then what can we use for our energy needs?"

Sweitzer said he is "an environmentalist to some extent" and added "I wasn't going to do anything to harm the

fish or wildlife," but admitted that "somewhere down the line you have to give and take a little."

He realizes that he and his opposition have to sit down and talk before the Boulder Creek project turns into a lengthy legal battle. He has extended an invitation to ECOS, the Sierra Club, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and land-use attorney Ed Sullivan to meet and work out any problems they may have with his hydro-electric project.

"If they want to be environmentalists and have a role in shaping this mountain, fine," he said. "But don't go taking sniper shots at me. Let's sit down and talk."

Sweitzer wants to show his opponents that he will act in good faith by installing a fish ladder, replanting the logged-off area, maintaining the road and clearing the creek of obstructions.

Those were concerns stressed by ECOS.

"We will weigh the invitation cautiously," said Andria Cabral of ECOS. She said that her organization would evaluate the pros and cons of the conference with patience and "not rush into anything, even on this short notice."

She said she would refer the invitation to Sullivan, ECOS's counsel, and he will make the final decision on whether or not to accept.

Tomorrow, July 31, the Water Policy Review Board will conduct a public hearing on the project. At issue will be a preliminary permit which, according to staff person Tom Kline, would allow Sweitzer up to two years to study the creek and the feasibility of the project. It would not allow any construction.

The hearing will begin at 10:30 a.m. at the Sandy Community Center.

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