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An alliance

Thirty years ago, Alana Probst and Arthur Dye visited the Long Beach Peninsula as representatives of an environmental organization called Ecotrust. It was the brainchild of Spencer Beebe with a home base in Portland.

They initially were met with suspicion, but soon proved their worth. Ecotrust wished to partner with locals and protect or heal a Northwest lifestyle — oystering, fishing and logging (and enhance eco-tourism) — in hopes of finding some way to parcel out the few remaining stands of evergreen and salmon runs in a sustainable fashion. And to rebuild the local economy, their greatest strength. Ecotrust formed the Willapa Alliance and during the next decade, they reshaped the ideals of a handful of dreamers.

In a fruitful alliance with

Nature Conservancy, the state Department of Natural Resources and the Willapa Alliance, Ecotrust brokered the purchase of the Bone and Niawakium estuaries, rebuilt watersheds on Bear River and the Palix, and participated in the preservation of western cedar stands in the Nemah and other watersheds. Congressman Don Bonker kicked in support and nearly singlehandedly saved Long Island from the chainsaw.

A confluence of conservationist organizations (Nature Conservancy and DNR being strong players) preserved large stands of cedar behind Ellsworth Creek and later expanded protection through a much larger land purchase that extended along the lower Naselle River.

About this time, Rex Ziak charged into a corporate office in New York City and brokered protection for a stand of magnificent cedars near the Naselle Bridge. Ziak did much more. He and Kathleen Sayce educated us on the finer points of the green world that sprouts around us. Many contributed, including the federal government.

Preaching engagement

As I drive the winding road that snakes around Willapa Bay, memories continue to spill like a soft spring water. Now, crossing the borderline between middle-age and that nexus into the undefinable netherlands, I can't help but reflect on what was accomplished



DWIGHT CASWELL PHOTOS

ABOVE: Alder trees near Bruceport, Wash. RIGHT: Pelicans in Tokeland, Wash.

as well as where and when we failed.

The green lands speak to the soul and to the spirit of the good earth. Still, battles continue to erupt. Donald Trump is summarily dismantling 50 years of hard environmental accomplishments at a time when the noose is tightening on an endangered planet. I would like to know if the president has ever walked through the Redwoods or stood under the shadow of ancient Sequoias? Certainly, few of these

giants inhabit the terrain of his many golf courses, manicured as they are.

But I'll dote on small victories and with an old man's resilience, travel High Hope Road with my backpack and a pocketful of promises. To the young people, I preach engagement; to their parents, I say, teach your children well; to the Baby Boomers, hey, persist while you can!

And when you drive past the Willapa Bay National Willapa Refuge, drop in and visit with Jackie Ferrier, a



road warrior herself who had a huge impact on our bay and region and, ultimately, the well-being of Planet Earth, all in size-7 knee boots.

Another inspiration, Robert Michael Pyle, is just now brewing his first pot of coffee and settling down to his typewriter. He will continue to inspire us with his sensitive and objective writings. Please read "Wintergreen: Rambles in a Ravaged Land," just re-released. Sky Time in Gray's River: Living in Keeps in a Forgotten Place" is a masterwork.

The sun rises

The bay is ebbing. Mallard and pintail are rooting for their breakfast. River otter with cute furry paws are frolicking in the seven rivers that grace Willapa Bay. Spruce are donning new spring clothes with bright green fingertips while the whole Willapa ecosystem draws in a deep breath and shines on.

The sun rises. Remember: We are the children of baby moons and dark winter skies. **CW**

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