

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

It's smart to keep the people informed

Sometimes, what government agencies point to as proper or legal procedure, fails to address the purpose and intent of the procedure.

A case in point is the present impasse in Banks. In 1994, when notice was published and/or posted announcing a public hearing on a proposed subdivision, everything regarding the announcement was done legally. The problem is that doing what was legal, simply wasn't sufficient. This was a subdivision that would add more than 300 homes in a town that had about that same number of homes.

Because the development would have a huge impact on the residents of Banks, even on the residents in the surrounding community because of the schools, a lot of grief (and money) could have been avoided by going beyond the legal requirements of "notice". This is one time when press releases should have been sent to every newspaper in the area; when large, noticeable flyers should have been posted all around town; when the assistance of the schools should have been solicited to have notices sent home with students.

It's true that "actual" notice requires more effort, and sometimes more cost, than "legal" notice. It's also true that citizens should put more effort into paying attention to the information that is available to them and should attend city council and school board meetings.

Nevertheless, when a potentially controversial subject comes before a local governing board, it's far more sensible to bring it out into the open than it is to hope that no one notices.

On a subject with far less impact than the Banks project, Columbia County Commissioners have turned their backs on a tradition that was used to maintain some representation for citizens in the less populated areas of the county.

For many years, the three lay members of the county budget committee were appointed from among citizens who lived in Rainier, Vernonia, Clatskanie, Mist, etc., because of the population bulge that resulted in electing commissioners and other officials from St. Helens and Scappoose. Not any more. In a unanimous vote, Sandy Dillard and Bob Schmor, were appointed to vacancies on the budget committee that were formerly held by people from Vernonia and Rainier. The two new members are both from St. Helens.

This isn't a complaint about the ability of either appointee to do a good job. This is simply another case when "legal" notice wasn't the same as "actual" notice. Posting a notice on the bulletin board at the courthouse is of little use to people who have no reason to go to the courthouse. Publishing a notice in newspapers that don't cover the county is legal, but fails to give actual notice.

A little effort on the part of the commissioners would have been appreciated. Incidentally, when was the last time anyone saw a county commissioner in Vernonia or Mist?

Ah, yes, back to the good old days!

JUST THINK - THE DAYS ARE GROWING LONGER !!

PICKING THE LESSER OF 2 EVILS?

WHY DO THE MEDIA HAVE SUCH CONTROL ON WHO TO VOTE FOR...

ONE OF THE TWO OVERPRICED, OVERRATED, OVERPUBLISHED, BAD MOUTHED, EGOTISTICAL, HYPED-UP CANDIDATES. WHY DON'T WE HEAR AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OTHER CANDIDATES... WHO MIGHT BE A BETTER CHOICE?!

CAN'T I MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE!?

VOTE !! 96!!

Wilson Jan 96 THE INDEPENDENT SPRING'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER



Ike Says

By Dale Webb, member
Izaak Walton League, Nehalem Valley Chapter

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is currently working on statewide fishing regulations to see if they can be simplified through consolidation, elimination or other approaches, without harming long-term conservation of fish populations or reducing angling opportunities. At the same time, each district reviewed its regulations to see whether they are adequately protecting their respective stocks. This is where we hit a snag.

Earlier this year, biologists from California to Alaska met in Reedsport for the first-ever sea-run cutthroat trout conference. The consensus of the participants is that sea-run cutthroat trout are disappearing fast. The scientists based their agreement on anecdotal evidence such as creel surveys and dam counts. Creel surveys on the Columbia River have declined from an average of about 5,000 sea-run cutthroat in the 1970s to about 50 currently. The Siuslaw is producing only about 10% of its late 1960s harvests. Sea-run cutthroat have been monitored at Winchester dam since 1946, showing a population of about 1000 per year until 1956; since then, the population has declined to nearly nothing. It is the consensus that all coastal populations are suffering from low population numbers.

Our district biologist, Walt Weber, concurs that the population in the Nehalem system has declined and he is now forced to propose restrictive fishing regulations to help protect this species. The district staff is proposing to "Eliminate winter trout season to protect juvenile salmon/steelhead and sea-run cutthroat". Another staff proposal is that "Trout bag limit in all NW zone streams be 2 per day and they must be 12 inches in length. This is a conservation measure to protect sea-run cutthroat trout". Right now I'm hearing a lot of "Oh! No way!"

Many people are thinking "there are a lot of cutthroat trout in the river", and they are right. The problem is that there aren't a lot of sea-run cutthroat trout in the river and they look the same as all the other cutthroat trout in the river. There are two kinds of cutthroat trout in the Nehalem River; one is a residential fish that never leaves the river system. The sec-

ond is a sea-run, anadromous fish that goes to the ocean, then returns to the river to spawn, much like salmon and steelhead. Other than maybe having some sea lice on them after re-entering the Nehalem River, they look identical to the resident fish. I know a lot of fishermen are saying they can tell the difference, that sea-runs are much brighter, which may be true for a short period of time, but after the fish have been in the river for a while, biologists say you cannot tell them apart.

The paradox for biologists is to protect the sea-run population and still provide a residential cutthroat fishery. The first regulation, eliminating the winter trout season, protects adult sea-run cutthroat while they are in the river to spawn and on their way back to the ocean in late winter (February and March). The second regulation protects juvenile sea-run cutthroat during the summer fishery. Juvenile cutthroat trout do not smolt out of the Nehalem until they are about 10 inches in length. We have probably been catching a lot of sea-run smolts in the Spring-Summer trout fishery without knowing it. The two-fish daily bag is to help protect any adult sea-runs that may be in the river in late summer by reducing fishing impact.

One of the biggest problems with trying to protect this fishery is that very little is known about sea-run cutthroat trout. We do not know how they are distributed in the Nehalem system, where they spawn, what the population is (exactly), how the juveniles move through the river system and many more questions.

The reality of the new fishing regulations is that the fishery that many of us grew up with is now history, fishing in the small streams and beaver ponds seldom produces fish longer than 12 inches. These small streams and ponds may not be sea-run habitat (nobody knows), but writing regulations so we could fish certain small streams or beaver ponds would be a nightmare of regulations that not even my lawyer could decipher.

The reality of this situation is that sea-run cutthroat trout and coho salmon are in a race to be our next endangered species. If we take corrective measures now, we may be able to help keep sea-run cutthroat trout off the list. Fishing has most likely played a major role in

Please see page 3