

Opinion

The INDEPENDENT

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Closed government equals open distrust

The best part of Oregon state government, since its inception, has been the traditional openness which has allowed citizens to talk directly with the people who make decisions.

At this time, a disturbing trend is underway, one which will eliminate that openness and substitute "staff reports" in lieu of real, live people talking to decision-makers.

A case in point is recent action by the Environmental Quality Commission to approve expansion of vehicle emissions testing in the Portland Metropolitan area. The commission made that decision without hearing from anybody in the expanded area, which now includes Scappoose, because only a hearings officer listened to all of the testimony, which was then put into a staff report. Additionally, testimony was cut off about three weeks before the commission decided the question.

This is a neat and tidy way to bring questions of public policy before a board or commission because the members who make the decisions don't have to listen to emotional or boring or inappropriate testimony. Instead, they merely need to read the testimony — as translated by staff members after having been given to a third party — off of an unemotional piece of paper. This procedure is a really great step forward for dictatorship.

In another case, with a different way of keeping citizens uninformed and at arm's length, the State Department of Forestry effectively lied to citizens at Fishhawk Lake by saying *they* had no plans to clear-cut the area (see article on page 1) even while they were seeking approval for someone else to clear-cut the same property.

Perhaps this penchant for keeping the unwashed masses (citizens) away from the nobility (bureaucrats) is one result of the trickle-down theory the federal government was touting a few years ago, goodness knows there are enough examples there.

However it got here, the West Oregon Electric Cooperative Board of Directors certainly has succumbed to the same petty condition. Their ridiculous policy on providing information first forces members to jump through hoops (entertainment for the royal family of directors?), then obstructs the declared intent of the policy—protecting the rights of members.

While personnel files should remain confidential, there is no good reason for West Oregon to withhold information about operating procedures and/or the costs of operations. There may be a valid reason from the viewpoint of those who equate secrecy with security, but there are no good reasons.

Whether the people who are footing the bill are being abused or misused by government or by their own "co-op" matters very little. What does matter is that WOEC has forgotten the meaning of the words "member-owned cooperative" and our state government has forgotten the proud tradition it established long ago.



Ike Says

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

Summer has finally arrived and, by the time you read this article, we probably will have had the hottest days of the year. With this hot weather will almost certainly come lethal water temperatures in our local rivers for salmonid populations. We are monitoring the situation again this year to see if the "Great Flood" had any effect on stream temperatures.

Talking about temperatures rising, I recently spoke with a representative of the North Coast Game Association (Astoria-based sportsmen group) and it sounds as if the doe hunting issue is going to blow up again. ODF&W is again talking about opening up a doe harvest in the Saddle Mountain Unit, beginning in 1997. The hunt would be only in the Western half of the unit, for about 400 tags. This was in the agreement between ODF&W and NCGA when the moratorium on doe hunting was imposed in 1994. But also in the agreement was that ODF&W and sportsmen groups would collaborate on an agreeable plan to gauge the results of the moratorium at the end of the three years. From what I have heard and seen the agreement part of the deal has been a little lopsided.

The agreement specified several criteria to be used for judging the success or failure of the antlerless hunt moratorium. Buck harvest, hunter success, spotlight trends and ODF&W's new FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared Radar) study were to be the baselines for judging. Here's where the twist comes in: ODF&W has concluded the FLIR study needs at least five years of data collection for valid results (something that I argued for from the beginning). So ODF&W devised a plan to split the Saddle Mountain Unit, so the FLIR study area in the Eastern half will not be affected by the antlerless harvest in the Western half. Questioning our district biologist about why they needed five years (I knew why, but I wanted him to say it) for the FLIR study, he replied, "They need five years of study so they have adequate data to base their findings on." I agree, and so do the sportsmen groups.

Where we disagree is that, by allowing this antlerless harvest, the trends for buck harvest and spotlight surveys will be negatively affect-

ed and we will not see the true effect of an antlerless moratorium. ODF&W could have bought a lot of credibility by offering to hold off on the antlerless harvest until the end of the five year study. ODF&W wants to conduct the antlerless hunt to collect tooth samples to do an age structure of the population. This is another point of contention. Upon questioning the district biologist about what, exactly, they are looking for, I have yet to get a straight answer. I feel that in three years there will be little difference in age structure except for a higher percentage of younger animals in the population.

To illustrate the thinking of the district biologist, during NCGA's spring banquet, he was asked, "If the moratorium is shown to produce higher buck harvest, better hunter success and is generally better for the population, will ODF&W still promote antlerless harvest in the Saddle Mountain Unit?" The answer was, "Probably, yes"! It was a good thing there wasn't a long rope in the crowd or somebody might have been swinging from the Astoria column.

The situation with our elk herds isn't much better. We continue plugging along with about 400 bull elk harvested each year in the Saddle Mountain Unit. Gone are the hey-days of 900 bulls-plus harvested each year, along with the top rating for bull harvest in any unit in the state.

I questioned our district biologist about this and his answer, like his two predecessors, was that "This unit is fat with elk." I continued, saying, "My research into elk tells me that a cow elk has a calf every-other year, that half the calves are bulls and that they experience a 50% mortality loss before a year in age, right?" His reply was, "Yeah, that's fairly correct." Of course he couldn't argue, this data comes from ODF&W.

Well, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that it would have taken at least 7200 productive cow elk to produce an annual harvest of 900 bulls a year. This means that elk herds in the Saddle Mountain Unit would have numbered at least 10,000 animals. ODF&W's figure for the current elk population is over 8,000 elk. But, with 8,000 elk we should be

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