

The INDEPENDENT

Serving the upper Nehalem River valley. Published twice monthly, on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, by Public Opinion Laboratory Ltd., 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064, as a free newspaper. Editors and Publishers, Dirk & Noni Andersen. Sports Editor, Caren McGaugh. Phone/Fax: (503) 429-9410.

Opinion

File soon for mayor or council positions

Because the filing deadline for city offices is August 24, it's time for all potential candidates to get busy.

Both Vernonia and Banks will be electing mayors and councilors. These positions can be extremely frustrating to people whose personal agendas are the primary reason for seeking office.

On the flip side of the coin, people who seek these positions for the wrong reasons can also do a lot of harm because they aren't interested in the overall future of their communities.

Decisions facing municipal boards may not be earth-shaking, by any standard, but they have a great impact on citizens inside the city limits and, sometimes, outside the city limits. Because of this, councilors are needed who can put aside their preconceived notions of what "should" be done and concentrate on what is both necessary and legal.

People who will do a good job as either mayor or councilor will be people who are not afraid to look at change, who are able and willing to look at all sides of a proposal, and who are able to make decisions that may be unpopular. Above all, a person in any of these positions must be objective because a "gut feeling" may only be indigestion.

Public should look closely at proposed ordinances

The Vernonia City Council is looking at two new ordinances (described in article on page 1 and published in full on pages 16 and 17) in hopes that they will help reduce vandalism. The goal is good. The ordinances, as written, may not be.

Beyond the language of the proposed ordinances, however, is the question of whether they are needed. That question has nothing to do with whether children should be unsupervised in public at any hour of the day or night—they should not be.

The question arises because state law already covers the situations addressed in the proposed ordinances; so well, in fact, that the curfew ordinance cites Oregon statutes in almost every clause.

If the problem exists in spite of state law, why would an additional law change the situation? In either case, it is the responsibility of law enforcement officers to enforce the laws. If they are unable to do so now, additional laws won't change anything.

Homework won PUC case

The decision by the Oregon Public Utilities Commission to add Vernonia to the Portland Extended Area Telephone Service didn't happen out of thin air. The people of Vernonia should be proud of their efforts to demonstrate to the PUC how strongly the "community of interest" affects residents here.

By following the criteria required by the PUC, the cooperative effort of too many people to name will have positive results for the community at large.

That's what "community" is all about.

ALL NEW

TAKE THE TEST

NOW YOU CAN TEST YOURSELF IN THE PRIVACY OF YOUR OWN HOME!

AM I AN ENVIROMENTALIST?

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:
LARGE PLASTIC BAG, CIGARETTE + MATCH, CLOCK OR WATCH

WHAT TO DO:
PUT CIGARETTE IN MOUTH AND LIGHT IT. PUFF AWAY, THEN PLACE PLASTIC BAG OVER HEAD AND HOLD TIGHT AROUND NECK. KEEP PUFFING.

IF AT ANY TIME IN THE NEXT 3 MINUTES YOU NEED TO REMOVE BAG IN SEARCH OF PURE AIR THIS PROVES THAT YOU ARE AN ENVIROMENTALIST! THIS CAN BE YOUR SECRET - YOU DON'T HAVE TO SHARE THE RESULTS WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY OR ANYBODY!

Get an answer now

IT'S FUN IT'S EASY

Ike Says...

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

If recent news reports were correct, by the time you read this article coho salmon will be listed as a threatened or endangered species. There has been much argument about whether the Oregon salmon plan should have preempted the listing of the coho salmon. My view is that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) had disregarded the Endangered Species Act (ESA) law when opting not to list the salmon. The language is very clear, a species shall be listed if it meets the criteria of the ESA. Just because a state says it is going to do all these wonderful things to recover the species after it has collapsed, is not grounds for not listing. The NMFS should have known this, since there was a similar ruling out of Texas about a year ago.

The Oregon Salmon Plan is a good plan and should be the foundation for any recovery efforts. I am sure that the NMFS does not have a better plan or the money or manpower to do a better job.

So what is listing going to do to help the Oregon plan? Enforcement! What the Oregon plan lacked was some teeth. The Oregon plan relied on enforcement through state agencies. Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber stated that he wanted state agencies to strictly enforce existing laws, but not to enact new laws. This sounds good and would have worked if his directive had been followed. The truth is, the existing laws have not been strictly applied or some of them are inadequate.

The most bizarre situation I have found is that the agency most people turn to when there is a fish or wildlife problem is the most toothless creature on earth. The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODF&W) has virtually no power to enforce laws for the protection of fish or wildlife.

Here are some cases in point: If I observe a timber operation cutting down all the trees along a stream who do I call? Since the law about cutting down streamside trees was written to help protect fish, I would call ODF&W. And I would be wrong! I would need to talk to the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF).

If you observe a stream that is muddy when it shouldn't be, who do you call? The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) right? Probably wrong again. If the waters are coming from forested lands you again must call ODF. If the muddy waters are coming from a development or city or state facility, then you would call the DEQ.

If you observe somebody removing a rock from a stream or actually moving a stream, who do you call? Ghostbusters? No, the Oregon Division of State Lands.

If you observe a dairy farmer flushing his cows' manure down a ditch and into a stream, who do you call? The Oregon Department of Agriculture and probably DEQ.

Have you noticed that everybody except ODF&W has the laws that help protect our fish and wildlife? This confuses me and, I am sure, a lot of other people.

It has also been this writer's observation that the protection of the fishery resources by these agencies has been less than spectacular. There have been streams moved and filled illegally, illegal rock removal from active spawning beds, and streams so silted that you couldn't see your hand ten inches under the surface of the water, but has one citation been issued? No! The truth is, most of the agencies that have the power to enforce these environmental laws have neither the staffing nor the will to do so. In some cases, it appears to be the fox guarding the hen house.

Even when fines are imposed for breaking the law, more often than not, the fine is significantly less than the rewards gained from the illegal activity. This is where the NMFS will come into play on protecting the coho salmon. The ESA states that if a listed species is taken illegally, sanctions of hundreds of thousands of dollars can be applied to the offending party. This will get everybody's attention in a big hurry.

Once the coho salmon are listed, the timber revenue dollars that are providing half the funding for the Oregon plan will cease to be collected; that's the law. It is good to see that the timber industry is saying they want to continue this tax even though the coho are listed. It will be up to our legislators to get this done and if an emergency session is called in November this item should be dealt with. Anything less and our elected officials would be remiss.

The timber industry has some major concerns about the NMFS imposing new logging regulations, especially concerning stream buffers. While I feel that the current regulations may need some minor tweaking, the proposed 300 foot no-cut buffer regulation is ridiculous. The additional benefits of these extra wide buffers has not been demonstrated. There are many other areas where NMFS should focus their attention, with the foremost being a riparian regulation that encompasses an entire river, not just the forested lands.

Currently, a landowner can cut down all his ri-

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