

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### What is impetus for community change?

On pages eight and nine of this issue of *The INDEPENDENT*, several citizens talk about events, projects or processes that they feel are important for the future of their communities. Without a doubt, the subjects they have chosen are important for the community: Infrastructure, downtown improvements, expanded recreation, new or upgraded public facilities of various sorts.

But what makes these goals or projects attainable?

Having observed government and communities for a long time, it's obvious that many commendable, even exciting projects never get anywhere. But look what is being accomplished in Banks, Mist-Birkenfeld and Vernonia.

Banks has a new school, even though the school district was in such dire financial straits that the state legislature felt it necessary to step and give a helping hand. A new public library went up within the last two years. The City of Banks is dealing successfully with the fastest population growth in the whole state. The Tri-City Fire District is looking at a March grand opening of their new fire station and headquarters.

Mist and Birkenfeld are usually hyphenated because the only local government in the area is the joint fire district. Despite the small population, a large, new fire station opened this past year and the community is working on development of a community center.

Vernonia has so many things underway, it's mind-boggling. The city just completed a new city hall and library, rehabbed the water distribution system, upgraded the sewage treatment system, installed new sidewalks, trees and lights downtown. Within the past four years, the sewage collection and storm drain systems were upgraded, a Head Start/community center building was constructed. The school district has wired most of the buildings for electronic communications, and built a covered play area for its largest elementary school. The health center moved into a larger, better-equipped building and health professionals are now available at least five days a week. Community members restored the Scout cabin without cost to the city. Downtown businesses have been sprucing up their buildings. There are still many public and private projects on the drawing board for the coming year.

Nevertheless, it is not the goals or the projects or the plans that create excitement. The excitement is created by the people who live in these communities, who have the enthusiasm and the political will to make improvements. Grants and loans may be involved, but local government can get nowhere without the enthusiastic support and involvement of its citizens.

The people of Banks, Mist, Birkenfeld and Vernonia have created all of the important things that are going on. It is their willingness to accept responsibility for the success of their communities that makes success possible.

In other words, the most important thing that has happened in our communities, is the development of a "community will" that stubbornly insists: "We will succeed!"

## NO CARTOON THIS WEEK

DUE TO 12K COMPUTER GLITCH

### Ike Says . . .

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

If you're reading this article, we must have survived the new Millennium. What will our future bring, and how did we fare in the past? I will look into my crystal ball to forecast the future, and, for the first time, will give an *Ike Says* rating to past events.

The *Ike Says* rating system is as follows: a grade of A = Royal Bull, B = Chromer Steelhead, C = Grouse, D = Gut-shot Buck and and F = Rot-ten Salmon.

Oregon Fisheries - rates a Gut-shot Buck. With multiple fisheries now listed under the Endangered Species Act and the newly curtailed ground fish fishery, the only fishery in Oregon that has little or no restrictions is the warm water fishery. Locally, the only consumptive fishery is in Lake Vernonia for warm water fish and planted trout.

Oregon hunting - rates a Grouse. While most of us get to hunt every year, we don't usually get to hunt our preferred area. Deer hunting is a shadow of what a lot of us grew up with. Elk hunting is faring better than deer, and in many areas is better than in the past. Locally, elk hunting has declined from the past, probably the result of an overly ambitious cow hunt program. Grouse hunting is a fraction of the past, most likely the result of land use practices. Duck hunting is a bright spot, due mostly to changed weather patterns and conservation efforts.

The following are ratings for State and local agencies and organizations.

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) - rates a Chromer Steelhead. This rating is not for our local roads, but for the extraordinary measures taken by ODOT while conducting culvert replacements and road stabilization projects. Two examples I observed last year were the Cook Creek culvert replacement and the road stabilization project. Never before have I witnessed such extraordinary measures to protect streams as these two projects. Cook Creek was pump-bypassed during the culvert project, and the Nehalem River was partially coffin-dammed during the bank stabilization project to keep the river from flowing through the work site. ODOT would have rated a Royal Bull, except for the cost of these projects; they must find a way to lower the costs so more projects can be conducted.

Upper Nehalem River Watershed Council - rates a Royal Bull. The council has to be applauded for its effort to bring all of the stakeholders to the table. While we usually don't agree

with each other, we are at least talking. The Watershed Council conducted its first culvert replacement project and has continued tree planting, stream bank stabilization and fencing projects. Extensive stream health monitoring is ongoing with projects measuring temperature, turbidity and macro invertebrates. A comprehensive study of the Nehalem River watershed is nearing completion by Portland State University, under contract to the Watershed Council.

Northwest Natural Gas - rates a Gut-shot Buck. Northwest Natural was on track for a Royal Bull until the end of their new pipeline project. Northwest Natural had used extraordinary measures to protect the environment during the pipeline project, such as boring under streams and wetlands. All excavated sites were graded, stabilized and seeded. Silt curtains and hay bale usage was extensive. The timber industry could benefit a lot by examining Northwest Naturals' protection measures. The reason Northwest Natural receives a low rating is the unethical diversion of water from the Nehalem River for the purpose of testing the pipeline. Northwest Natural entered into a contract with the City of Vernonia for water. Water was withdrawn from Rock Creek while the Nehalem River was at a very low level. In all actuality, Northwest Natural was getting around water resource laws which would not allow water usage until November. While buying water from the City of Vernonia may have been legal, it was highly unethical. The impact from diverting upwards of two hundred thousand gallons of water a day from Rock Creek is unknown, but the fact that ODF&W's instream water right was not being met at the time of withdrawal, implies damage may have occurred.

City of Vernonia - rates a Gut-Shot Buck. While Vernonia has made major improvements in the downtown area, new city buildings, the opening of Bear Creek and improved water system, some of these improvements were done at the expense of the environment. As mentioned above, the selling of water to Northwest Natural was unethical. Summer run Chinook salmon were in the stream trying to migrate upstream while this water was being sucked right out from beneath them. The improvements to the water distribution system also caused some harm to our local streams. On several occasions, I witnessed concrete cutting operations that discharged the cutting water directly into the City's storm drain system. Of course, on the first rainy day, all this material was moved into Rock Creek. The water pipeline crossing of Rock Creek was a major incident. According to Larry

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