

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Vernonia attracting the right attention

More than 400 walkers and bike riders registered for last Saturday's Volkswalk in Vernonia, sponsored by the Cedar Milers of Beaverton. Everyone appeared to have a good time and there were rave reviews from visitors about the friendly and helpful people in Vernonia.

Does anyone think 400 visitors would have gone for a walk in Vernonia 15 years ago? 12 years ago? No, not even 10 years ago.



Judy Ferguson, left, of Keizer, leads the way for Donna Carver, of Salem.

The Linear Trail started it; continued improvements, especially a paved path around the lake, have increased the attraction. Streetscaping has done wonders but, most important of all, are the efforts of both citizens and local government to keep the town looking well-cared-for.

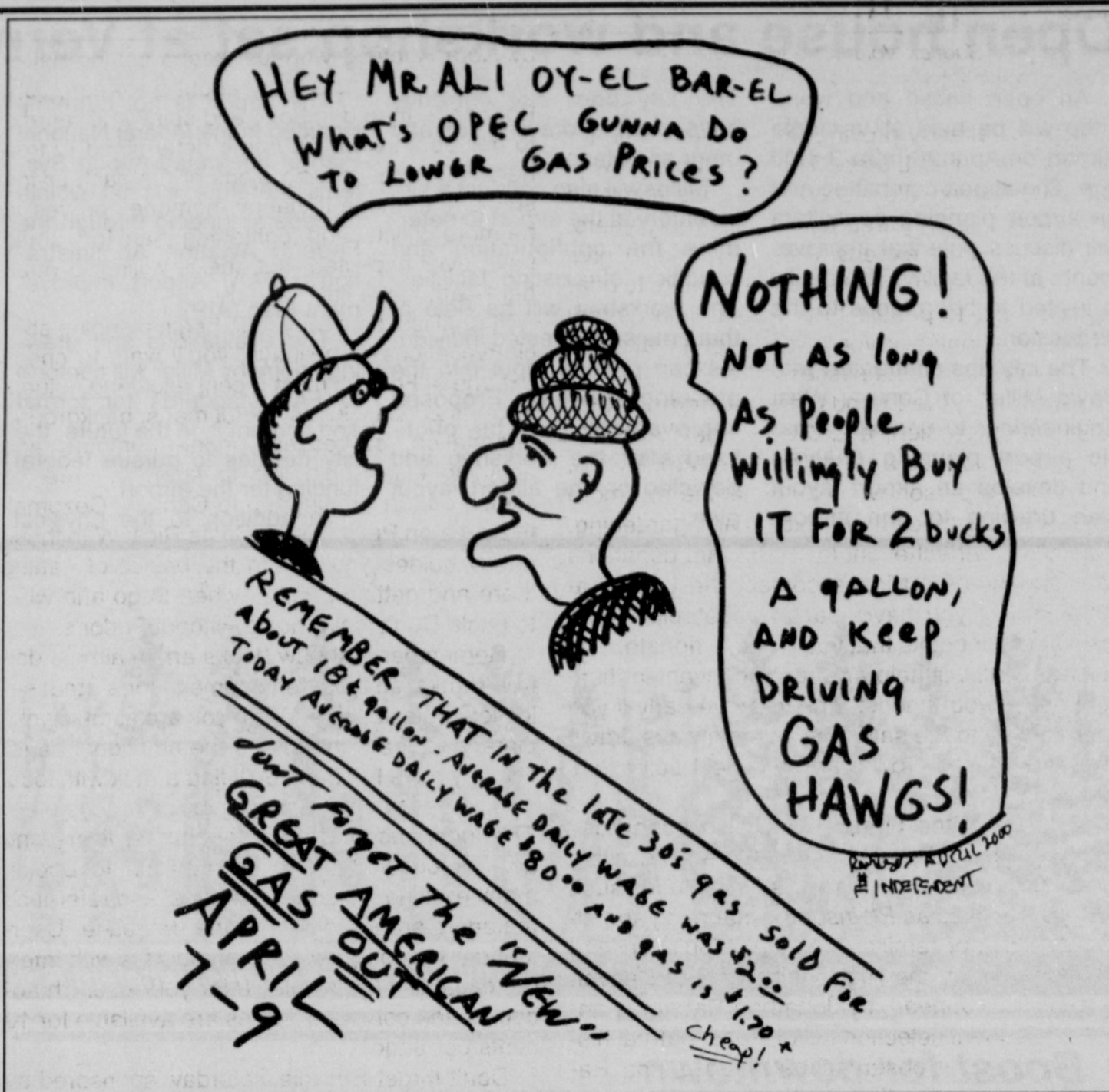
It wasn't always like this. There was a time when the town was run down from simple neglect; eyesores were ignored, it was not a pretty sight. It would be easy to become complacent and let things slide again but, if we care enough, that won't happen.

Independents may vote in May 16 Demo primary

Voters who are registered as "non-affiliated" can cast ballots in all of the Democratic primary races except for president. That selection is reserved for party members. It won't happen automatically, however. If you are registered as non-affiliated, you must request a Democratic ballot from your county elections office no later than April 25.

The Oregon Republican party has not opened any of its primary races to nonaffiliated voters.

Being registered as "independent" is not the same as nonaffiliated. Independent voters may not participate in the Democratic party primary race.



Ike Says . . .

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

The Feds are coming! The Feds are coming! No, that's not the cry of whiskey bootleggers, but the cry of watershed councils across Oregon. A review of the 4-D rules recently released by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) makes apparent that they view watershed councils as a threat to the very salmonid species the councils are dedicated to saving. In fact, the councils have a two-year window of grace to obtain an approved Watershed Conservation Plan (WCP) or their activities may be considered a "takings" under the Endangered Species Act.

For the life of me, I cannot imagine how planting riparian trees and constructing fences to exclude livestock can be envisioned as a threat to salmonids, but someone in NMFS apparently has astigmatism. Those two activities were specifically mentioned in the 4-D rules. The state of Oregon has responded with comments to NMFS that were scalding, to say the least. The Oregon plan is the best vessel of hope to save the salmonid populations in this state, yet NMFS indicates they may torpedo the ship. If this rule is imposed, coordinators of the 85 watershed councils in Oregon will have to scramble to comply with this still undefined requirement. This will be an impossible task for watersheds that do not yet have an assessment of their watershed in progress or completed. Instead of emphasizing real, on-the-ground habitat restoration, watershed coordinators will spend their time trying to navigate this new flood of paperwork.

The proposed 4-D rules also will torpedo the use of large

equipment in streams, eliminate the use of cable and rebar to stabilize large woody debris and will preclude timber companies from placing large woody debris in streams during forestry operations. Are the people at NMFS brain dead or what?!? These are some of the most valuable tools in the salmon restoration arsenal. It appears that somebody at NMFS has a vision of large, old growth timber falling across streams to provide all the needed large woody debris. I hope that person can live another 150 years, because that's how long it will be before it happens. In the meantime, we must supplement the recruitment of large woody debris whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Also apparent in the 4-D rules is that NMFS will target fish hatcheries operated by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODF&W). In fact, certain fall fisheries may be in jeopardy this year, due to a very short-time line for ODF&W to document the fish runs in Oregon streams, although most of the fish in hatcheries are hatchery fish. Don't be surprised if hatchery production across the state is dramatically scaled back.

Recently ODF&W has come under attack for clubbing salmon at some of its Coastal hatcheries. Some have even theorized that ODF&W is killing fish just to keep populations down and thus have control over private property rights. This is pure hog wash! Let me assure you, as slick as some of ODF&W personnel are, they aren't that slick. The clubbing of salmon has been going on for decades, it's nothing new, and is a purely logistical response to successful hatchery operations. All streams have finite resources to sustain fisheries - just as a farmer can

only raise so many cattle on a farm. Hatcheries cause an imbalance in the natural scheme of things by increasing the number of fish produced in a river system. In order to effectively accomplish this, most of the rearing and growth of young fish occurs in the hatchery until they are ready to smolt, then they are released into the stream and go immediately to the ocean. At this point, the impact of the additional fish from a hatchery is thought to be minimal since they spend very little time in a river system. However, if the returning adult hatchery fish were allowed to spawn back in the wild, they could overwhelm the available feed and cause a collapse in the river system fish populations. Consider the situation this way: A local cattle rancher had a big feed lot operation with lots of cattle and very little pasture land. If, in the summer, he released his cattle into the surrounding hills then, when winter came, he discontinued his feed lot and let the cattle graze only in the pasture, what do you think would happen to the cattle? This is what could happen in a hatchery stream. There are also concerns about cross breeding of hatchery and wild fish and whether hatchery fish may outcompete wild fish due to their earlier spawning period. I agree with some of the protesters that more information and involvement should have been provided to the public before some of the management decisions were implemented.

In mid-March, I accompanied our district big game biologist, Herman Biederbeck, on the annual deer spotlighting counts. We observed 12 deer, which was three more than last year, yet still woefully shy of the low thirties of previous years.

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