

# Paper or plastic? Which is more environmentally sound after all?

What do you answer when asked "paper or plastic" at the grocery store?

Because paper bags are made from trees — a renewable resource — and biodegrade more easily than plastic, they would seem to be favored over plastic bags, which are made from non-renewable petroleum products. But the choice between paper and plastic is more complicated than it first appears.

## The Argument For Plastic

Most plastic bags are made from some form of polyethyl-

ene (no. 2 or no. 4). During the manufacturing process, a paper bag made from virgin material requires more energy and creates more air and wastewater pollutants than a plastic bag, although in our area, most paper bags are at least 40 percent recycled content.

Plastic bags are lighter and use up less space than paper bags. This means that landfill space is conserved on a per unit basis, even though plastic takes longer to biodegrade. A smaller comparative volume wastes less gas, since it reduces shipping needs (one truck of plastic bags hold the equivalent of seven trucks of paper bags).

When recycled, plastic bags are shredded, melted and made into products such as wood-polymer lumber, drain pipes, plastic envelopes and new plastic bags. There are, however, very few places in the area that actually accept plastic bags for recycling.

Plastic bags are starting to contain more and more post-

consumer recycled content, often from other bags and from milk jugs. Check on the bag or ask your grocer if they contain post-consumer recycled material. This means that a lot less virgin resources and energy are used and a lot less pollution is created.

## The Argument For Paper

Brown paper bags, or kraft bags, are easy to recycle (usually with corrugated cardboard) and are recycled back into new kraft bags. All kraft bags in Oregon contain recycled fibers. Some are made of 100 percent post-consumer material, combining old bags with wood chips from old pallets.

Paper can be recycled several times before its fibers grow weak, whereas plastic recycling is usually a one-time process. The market for post consumer plastic bag material is weak and the supply of virgin plastic resins is cheap and available. Thus, paper bags use far fewer virgin resources than plastic bags. Paper recycling in this area is well estab-

lished, profitable, and done locally, maintaining low transportation costs.

## The Real Question

Why not dispose of the debate altogether? Getting the most use out of both types of bags reduces the demand for new ones and has a greater environmental impact than the choice between paper and

plastic. Reuse paper and plastic bags as many times as possible, try not to double bag, shop at stores that give bag refunds and use bags with high recycled-content.

For more information on recycling, visit <www.columbiacounty.org/recycling>, or call your Columbia County Recycling Coordinator at 397-1501.

## Merchant Marine flag will fly here

The official flag of the U.S. Merchant Marine will be presented to Vernonia Memorial Cemetery by the Oregon Chapter of American Merchant Marine Veterans. The donated flag will fly with others along the cemetery's Avenue of the Flags.

American Merchant Marine seaman have fought alongside the U.S. armed forces since 1775, while conducting the vital process of supplying materials for both military and civilian

needs. During World II, U.S. Merchant Marines suffered the highest rate of casualties of any branch of the service, with the exception of special units that helped protect the merchant seamen.

In 1988, U.S. Merchant Marine seamen were finally recognized as military veterans of World War II.

For more information about the American Merchant Marine Veterans organization, contact Vernonia resident R.N. "Chick" Jensen.

## Draft horses on display at PCC

The 34th annual Draft Horse Plowing Exhibition will be Saturday, May 20, from 10 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Portland Community College Rock Creek Campus.

It's a great event for families, and a day to experience and learn about another time, when everyday life was linked to the land. These one-ton muscle-powered, organically fueled teamsters will demonstrate a time-honored method of tilling the soil.

In addition to the draft horse activities, there will be booths demonstrating historical crafts and trades such as horseshoeing, blacksmithing, butter churning, ice cream making, spinning, tatting, quilting, woodcarving and basket mak-

ing. There will also be draft horse drawn hay rides and a petting zoo for the kids!

Draft Horse Day 2000 will be a day of education and family fun. Food, music and other displays will be available. This is a free event. For more information, call 645-5353.

## Legion meeting for election of officers

American Legion Post #119 will hold a business meeting on Tuesday, June 13. Included on the agenda is election of officers for the next year.

Post #119 meets in the Legion Hall, 627 Adams Avenue, Vernonia. For more information, call Ralph Sturdevant at 429-6696.

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## Hazardous waste disposal slated

A free hazardous waste disposal day will be held Saturday, May 20, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue, 20665 SW Blanton Street, in Aloha.

Metro Recycling staff invites people to take advantage of the free event to get rid of old paint, pesticides, thinners, solvents, antifreeze, art/hobby chemicals, pool/spa chemicals, poisons, and medical sharps (syringes, lancets, etc).

Upon arrival at the disposal site, remain in your car. A technician will unload your materials from the trunk of your vehi-

cle when you reach the unloading area. Do not smoke in the collection area.

If possible, keep products in original containers. Do not mix products together, as dangerous reactions can occur. Pack containers carefully in cardboard boxes in your vehicle's trunk, away from passengers and pets. Boxes and other containers, including gas cans, will not be returned. It is okay to bring old gasoline in milk jugs, but fill them just before you leave. Do not put items in plastic bags.

For more information, call Metro Recycling at 234-3000.

# Community Calendar

<b>MAY 2000</b> S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	<b>JUNE 2000</b> S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	<b>JULY 2000</b> S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	<b>AUGUST 2000</b> S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	<b>SEPTEMBER 2000</b> S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
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<b>VERNONIA</b>					
Al-Anon	Mondays	6:30 p.m., Head Start Bldg.	<b>MIST-BIRKENFELD</b>		
Alcoholics Anonymous	Mondays	6:30 p.m., Head Start Bldg.	M-BRFPD Board	2nd & 4th Tuesday	7:30 p.m., Main Fire Station
Alcoholics Anonymous	Saturdays	7:00 p.m., Head Start Bldg.	M-B Ambulance Assoc.	1st & 2nd Thurs.	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Arts & Crafts Society	2nd Thursday	1:00 p.m., New Hong Kong	M-B Firefighters Assoc.	1st & 2nd Wed.	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Boosters	2nd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., VHS Library	M-B Rescue	3rd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Boy Scout Troop 201	Tuesdays	7:00 p.m., Head Start Bldg.	M-B Helping Circle	2nd Wednesday	10:00 a.m., 755-2346 for info.
Boy Scout Troop 860	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., LDS Church	Natal Grange	2nd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., Grange Hall
Cemetery Beautification Comm.	2nd Thursday	7:00 p.m., City Library	<b>BANKS</b>		
Chamber of Commerce	2nd Wed.	Noon, Lew's Place	Alcoholics Anonymous	Fridays	8:00 p.m., Methodist Church
Doll Club	4th Tuesday	1:00 p.m., Senior Center	Banks City Council	2nd Tuesday	7:30 p.m., City Hall
Friends of the Scout Cabin	4th Monday	7:00 p.m., City Library	Banks Planning Commission	Last Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Girl Scouts	Thursdays	6:30-8 p.m., Christian Church	Banks School Board	2nd Monday	7:30 p.m., Jr. High Library
Izaak Walton League	3rd Thursday	For location call 429-7193	Banks Youth Group	Sundays, Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., UMC Youth Bldg.
Lions Club	1st & 3rd Tuesdays	6:30 p.m., Lew's Place	Chamber of Commerce	1st Thursday	12:30 p.m., Brown Derby
Nehalem Valley Car Club		For Info Call 429-4074	Citizen Participation Org.	3rd Monday, odd months	7:15 p.m., City Hall
Preschool Story Hour	Mondays	10:30 a.m., City Library	Friends of the Library	1st Saturday	10:00 a.m., City Library
TOPS	Thursdays	6:30 p.m., 1st Baptist Church	Lions Club	1st & 3rd Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Methodist Church
Upr Nehalem Watershed Council	4th Thursday	For location call 429-2401	Sunset Park Assoc.	3rd Wednesday	8:00 p.m., Gun Club
Vernonia Airport Committee	3rd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., City Library	TOPS	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Jr. High Library
Vernonia Cares Directors	1st Thursday	For location call 429-1414	Tri-City RFPD Board	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Station 13
Vernonia City Council	1st & 3rd Mondays	6:30 p.m., City Hall	<b>COLUMBIA COUNTY</b> (All meet in St. Helens unless otherwise noted.)		
Vernonia Comm. Dev. Corp.	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Head Start Bldg.	Board of Commissioners	Wednesdays	10 a.m., Courthouse
Vernonia Grange	2nd Friday	7:00 p.m., Grange Hall	Citizens for Senior Justice	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Sunset Park Church
Vernonia Health Center	2nd Thursday	6:00 p.m., 510 Bridge St.	COLCO Transportation	2nd Friday	10:30 a.m., Courthouse
Vernonia Planning Comm.	1st Thursday	7:00 p.m., City Hall	County Council of Seniors	2nd Friday	1:00 p.m., Courthouse
Vernonia Pride		For Info Call, 429-1204	County Fair Board	2nd & 4th Mondays	7:00 p.m., Fairgrounds
Vernonia Ridge Riders	Last Thursday	7:00 p.m., City Library	County Parks Commission	3rd Thursday	6:00 p.m., 1054 Oregon St.
Vernonia RFPD Board	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station	Emergency Comm. Dist. (9-1-1)	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Courthouse
Vernonia School Board	2nd Thursday	8:00 p.m., District Office	Historical Society	4th Wednesday	Noon, location call 429-3713
Vernonia Sr. Center Board	1st Friday	1:00 p.m., Senior Center	Traffic Safety Commission	1st Wednesday	7:00 a.m., Village Inn
Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station			
WOEC Directors	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., WOEC			

Organizations and meeting dates not listed may be included by calling 429-9410 or by mail to The INDEPENDENT, 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064.