

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

School staff to put on candidates night

Vernonia School District certified and classified staff are providing the community with a great opportunity to meet the nine candidates who are seeking spots on the school board in the March election.

All Vernonia school board candidates have been invited: Schann Nelson, Rick Hobart, Leslie O'Leary, Randall Hansen, Cari Levenseller, Perter Brock, James Krahn, Jeff Blum and Thomas Jones.

The format will allow a brief presentation by each candidate, including personal information, why they want to be on the school board, what they feel is the number one issue facing the school district now, and more. There will also be a question and answer period.

Five of these people will be involved in the direction Vernonia's schools will be taking during the next two to four years. Take the time to meet them February 12 in the Washington Grade School gym from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Bad memories of 1996 are gone, the good remain

When the flood waters receded in 1996, the extent of the clean-up required was stupendous. Household goods, carpets, appliances, building materials, all destroyed by the flood, piled up in a 300 foot-long, by 50 foot-wide mountain of soggy debris — twice. A log loader was needed to keep the trash under control. It took weeks simply to gather up the worst of it. Yet our clearest memories are of the people who helped during those weeks and weeks.

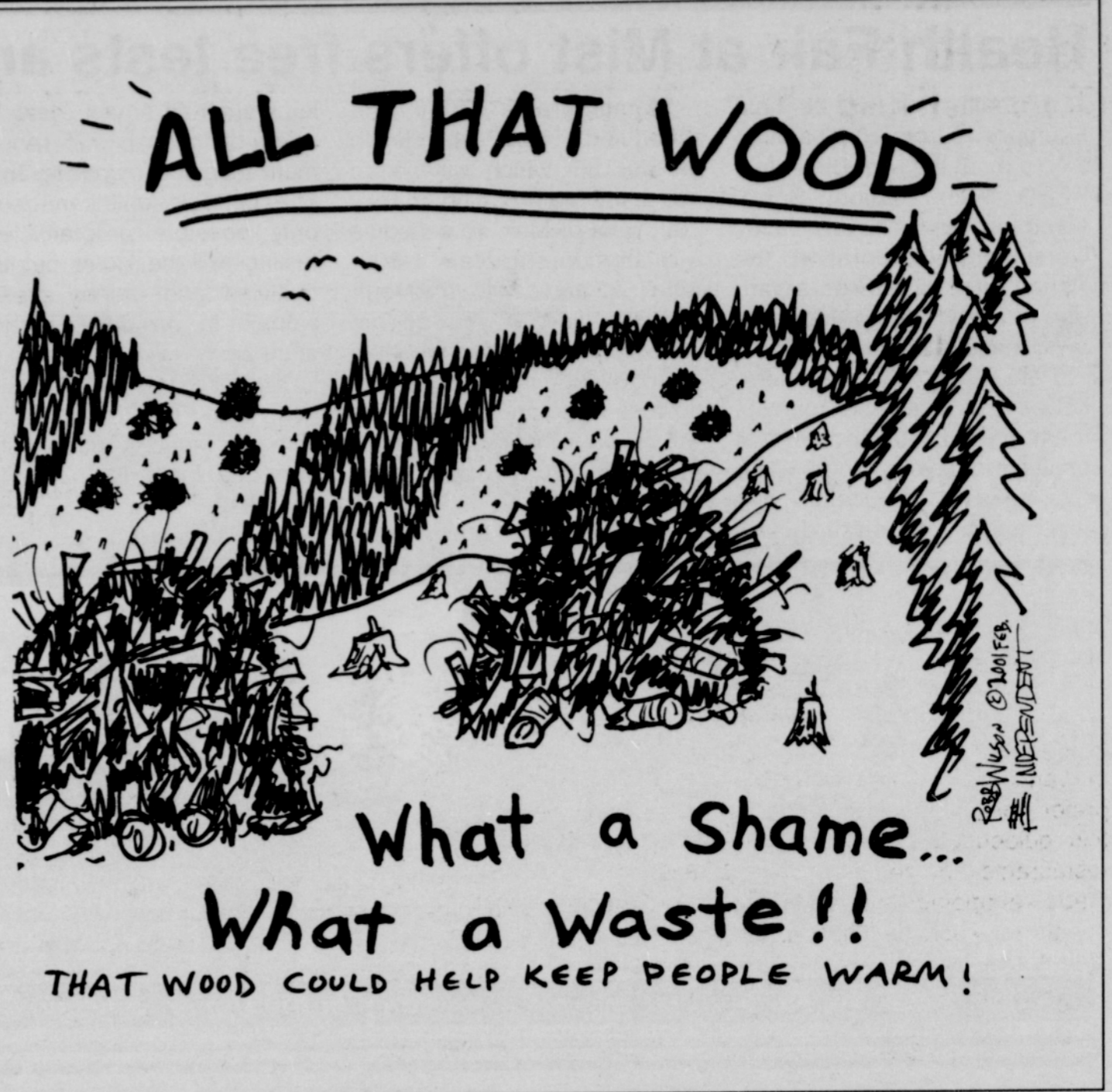
Families were displaced, their lives disrupted, sometimes for months. Yet our clearest memories are of the people who opened their homes to friends, neighbors and, yes, even to people they didn't know well..

Two of the schools were badly flooded, the kitchen equipment was destroyed, books were soaked, the wood shop was a disaster area. Three feet of water in the high school forced it to be closed for weeks. Yet, we remember how students from other schools put on drives to replace books and supplies, all the students from area high schools who got down and dirty mucking out the mud, the citizens from all walks of life who showed up at the school to help in any and every way.

Vernonia Cares took a double whammy; most of its food and supplies were destroyed and there were more people who desperately needed emergency food. Yet, we remember the motorcycle club from Portland that arrived with truckloads of food plus cash donations to purchase whatever else was needed.

So many homes were unlivable, yet we remember the many church groups who spent months and months rebuilding homes for those who couldn't do it themselves.

With all that, the memories we cherish most, five years later, are of the local people who helped each other, who supported each other emotionally and sometimes physically, who laughed and cried with each other, who were there when an ear or a shoulder was needed. They are wonderful.



Ike Says...

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

There has been a major development in upper management at Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Jim Greer, the current director, has resigned under pressure from the state legislature. Mr. Greer was a long term ODF&W employee and his future there was undetermined at the time of this writing. His resignation evidently stemmed from the displeasure of legislators with ODF&W's performance surrounding the Oregon Salmon Plan. It is also believed that a generally anti-ODF&W attitude from legislators who felt the agency was responsible for some of the current land use restrictions, was a factor in the pressure upon Greer.

While many of you may think I would be turning cartwheels of joy over this development, think again. While I agree that ODF&W needs to be restructured, I am not particularly at ease with how this is occurring. The change should be coming from the commissioners, not the legislature. Many legislators want to keep ODF&W weak in the regulatory arena, an area which, in my opinion, should be strengthened.

Governor Kitzhaber is also supporting this change in leadership and the move by the legislature to give the power of appointment of the ODF&W director to the Governor's office, instead of ODF&W commissioners, as it is now. This is a little strange, as the Governor appoints the commissioners, and they should do his bidding. This brings up the point that many hunters and fishermen have found to be true in the past. Since the commissioners are so closely involved with upper management at ODF&W, it is hard for the general public and the Governor to persuade them to make the changes necessary to address the needs of the organization's constituents.

The Governor's office is especially displeased with ODF&W for their handling of the Oregon Salmon Plan and their business-as-usual approach. Although this criticism is fair in some regards, it also must be recognized that ODF&W was treated like an orphan child of the Oregon Salmon Plan. A new agency, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, was created to administer the plan. This seemed to me to be a duplication of power and expense.

The problem with this development is the dilution of the status of Oregon sportsmen in an agency that is 92 percent funded, directly or indirectly, with their money. ODF&W is, and should remain, an agency whose primary purpose relates to the well-being of fish and wildlife

in the state of Oregon, to the benefit of the constituents who foot the bill. In most cases, all Oregonians benefit from this type of management, since it means healthy populations of the managed species. The dilemma with this approach arises when the constituents, such as fishermen, have been weaned on a flawed process, like fish hatcheries. While there have been great successes with hatcheries, they have been put in place as a substitute for the natural processes that occur in a stream. This does not work in the long term, and is not cost effective. Problems have been created by trying to harvest hatchery fish while protecting endangered species. In most cases, this has led to a harvest of the protected species and, thus, has been a threat to their well-being.

It must also be recognized that ODF&W will suffer immeasurably as hatchery production is diminished and the fish available for harvest are reduced. Sportsmen are not willing to pay for a non-consumptive fishery. While this may sound unsportsmanlike, think of it as buying a car that goes only 35 miles-per-hour, or playing golf without any holes. Many sportsmen feel that the need to bring home the bacon (fish) is a genetic trait that will not go away as fast as the decline of the fish preyed upon. This is just a fact of life.

On the wildlife side of this coin, great pressure is being brought to allow expanded commercialization of our wildlife, in the form of landowner tags and commercial elk ranches. This is where I do not trust legislators to deal with our natural resources. Our human race has developed upon resource extraction and depletion, usually at the expense of the species being utilized. The political climate in our legislature is still dominated by this sort of thinking, because that is where the money is. I see, in the near future, a tremendous clash, as the people who pay the bills at ODF&W meet head on with the political interests of state legislators, with ODF&W caught in the middle. Sportsmen must demand the respect and attention that their role as bill payers deserves. We must also demand that Oregon's wildlife remain a public, and only a public, entity. We must refuse to emulate Texas, where public wildlife is privately owned.

Oregon sportsmen will have to wait and see what direction ODF&W will take. Let your legislator know that, as the bill payers of ODF&W, we will demand that our concerns be addressed before those of special interests or opportunists. Otherwise, ODF&W may have to fund itself. Hopefully, we will finally be able to get the accountability and respect that sportsmen rightfully deserve from ODF&W.