

The INDEPENDENT

Serving the upper Nehalem River valley. Published twice monthly, on the first and third Thursdays of each month, by Public Opinion Laboratory Ltd., 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064, as a free newspaper. Publishers, Dirk & Noni Andersen. Editor, Noni Andersen. Phone/Fax: 503-429-9410, e-mail: noni@vernonia.com Display Advertising, Clark Mc-Gaugh, 503-429-9410, e-mail: clark@vernonia.com

Opinion

Nonvoters make travesty of democratic elections

There was a time in Oregon when citizens had the right to vote for or against issues without interference. That time is long gone and it was Oregon voters who threw away that unique element of a free and democratic society.

Now, if a voter wants to say yes to a ballot measure supporting a service as vital as 9-1-1 dispatching, another voter doesn't even have to cast a ballot to nullify that yes vote. This process blocks access to a fair election as surely as though thugs were blocking the door to the polling place.

This may even be a violation of federal election law. Perhaps state government should take a closer look.

Public transportation, ala Columbia County BOC

Remember last year, when the Columbia County Board of Commissioners wanted to develop a more efficient transportation system? They started out by torpedoing the Council of Seniors, effectively encouraging the state to decertify the only agency that served ALL seniors in the county and that, coincidentally, operated the only countywide transportation system.

Well, the BOC took over this summer, and senior citizens in Vernonia no longer have public transportation to Portland unless they go first to St. Helens. Smaaaart!

Don't worry, though, the BOC will fix it just as soon as they get enough money!

Remarkable, isn't it? Senior citizens operated a bus system with routes determined by the needs of people in each community – with the same amount of money that is absolutely, totally insufficient for the BOC!

The seniors had fund raisers to supplement the rural transportation funds they received, they also used to receive some money from the county. There was never quite enough money, but they managed.

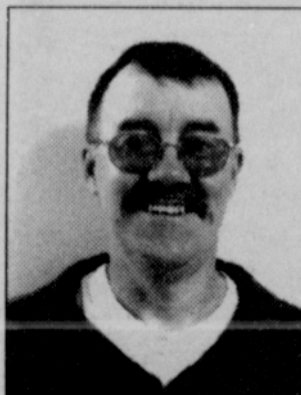
Columbia County Commissioners are going to improve the system, though – just as soon as they get \$146,464 more in grants! The lack of a system that can't even meet what the Senior Council supplied is all the fault of the federal government!

Remarkable conclusion, but it just isn't surprising.



Ike Says . . .

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



This year's Chinook salmon run was very exciting. The fall Salmon Festival was a great success and will surely grow in the future. An unofficial estimate of the Chinook salmon run in the Nehalem this year was 45,000 entering the bay and 30,000 making their way up the river. This salmon run has definitely made a huge comeback since the '60s. Part of the reason for that comeback has been increased protection of spawning fish in the upper Nehalem. The success in this protection was the acceptance by the public that these spawning fish had a value other than just something to eat or kill for the fun if it. Without people being active protectors, these fish would not have fared as well as they have.

Another part of the equation of why these fish have rebounded, is reduced fishing of these stocks in Canadian waters. When these fish leave the Nehalem as smolts, they turn north and forage in Southern Alaska and Canadian waters. Because of disputes between American and Canadian fishermen and the resulting compromises that have been developed, the Nehalem Chinook salmon are not as heavily harvested in the northern waters. As this run continues to build, it will lead to increases in allowable harvest and continued spectacular spawning viewing. This run is also leading to ever increasing nutrient enrichment of the Nehalem system,

something that experts discovered has been lacking in coastal waters for some time, and may well lead to recovery of other fishes like Cutthroat Trout, Coho and Steelhead. The amazing thing is, this is all occurring without a hatchery, it's all natural—the way it was in the past.

In 1998, the citizens of Oregon approved Ballot Measure 66, which allows 15 percent of lottery proceeds to be split between state parks and agencies protecting native salmon, wildlife habitat and watersheds. Many of us remember the uproar when the legislature cut the general fund budgets of state parks and GWEB (Governor's Watershed Enhancement Board, now called OWEB) and backfilled with Measure 66 monies, effectively keeping the budgets flat, when most Oregonians expected an increase in these agencies' budgets.

This controversy resurfaced after the latest legislative session, when it was discovered that over five million dollars was diverted from Measure 66 funds for a new research facility at the Fall Creek fish hatchery, on a tributary of the Alsea River (People remember the Fall Creek hatchery from news coverage showing hatchery personnel clubbing salmon, which created a furor among fishermen, landowners and the state legislature.). The legality of this money transfer has been questioned on the grounds that this does not follow the intent of Measure 66. The Oregon attorney general has decided that it does follow the intent of Measure 66 and the transfer of money will proceed.

So what will we get for the approximately \$7,000,000 appropriated for the new facility? To answer this question I contacted the Newport of-

Please see page 20