

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

For voters only; the rest of you aren't worth ink

Have you ever had to call 9-1-1? Did you expect them to answer? Did you vote last November, when Columbia County voters were asked to approve an operating levy for 9-1-1 emergency dispatching services?

If you answered "yes" to those questions, you are a minority in the county and, especially, in Vernonia.

Are you aware that most of your neighbors really don't care whether 9-1-1 answers your call when you need an ambulance, or firefighters, or a police officer? No, not just some of your neighbors, but *most* of them.

If you think those statements are wild, take a careful look at these numbers:

Of the 24,771 registered voters in Columbia County, 11,972 voted and 70 percent of them approved the levy renewal. But 12,799 didn't vote, invalidating the election because of the double majority requirement. These are the people who don't care whether 9-1-1 answers your call.

Of course, we smugly say, the people on the other side of the county don't worry about it as much as we do, because they have more, and closer emergency services. Well, don't bet the grocery money.

There are 1,042 registered voters in Vernonia's three precincts. Of these, 482 of you voted, but 560 of your neighbors don't care whether 9-1-1 answers your call, so they didn't vote.

The rural precincts in the Nehalem Valley showed slightly more concern. Rural Vernonia voters managed a 50.76 percent turnout; 51.93 percent of Mist and Birkenfeld voters cast ballots.

Overall, in Vernonia, Mist, Birkenfeld and rural Vernonia, 982 of you marked the one issue on your ballot, then either stamped the envelope and mailed it in, or dropped it off at the library. Seventy-seven percent of you wanted the operating levy renewed, but most of your neighbors really don't care whether 9-1-1 answers your call.

County-wide, 414 additional votes were needed to validate the election. In the Nehalem Valley, alone, 1,039 of your neighbors didn't vote. Even if five percent of them – a very high percentage – were in the hospital or on vacation, or somehow incapacitated, there are 979 who aren't at all concerned about whether 9-1-1 answers your call when you have an emergency.

Perhaps you should try to educate your neighbor.



Ike Says . . .

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



What's new for 2004? Actually, you will find few changes in hunting and fishing regulations this year. Few new hunts have been created and fishing regulations have only minor changes.

There is one big change that a lot of sportsmen and women better pay attention to – a new regulation will require the purchase of a shellfish license. If you are 14 years of age or older, you will need to plunk down your \$6.50 before you dig clams or touch a crab pot. It is important to remember that you must have a shellfish license to even *touch* a crab pot line, trap or help sort crabs. I don't know why the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife chose to be so restrictive but, be guaranteed, OSP will catch many uninformed people with this new regulation. This should be a real moneymaker for the state.

You will notice that it is going to cost a lot more for licenses and some tags. Hunting and fishing licenses went up \$5.00 each, as did both Deer and Elk tags. Turkey tags will be \$6.50, while Bighorn Sheep, Goat and Antelope each increased by \$10. Fishermen will pay an additional \$5.00 for their harvest card and, remember, this is for five less sturgeon than last year. I sure like getting less for more, how about you?

While these fee increases will bail ODF&W out of fiscal trouble for a few years, be sure they will be back in four years wanting more. With

families of four facing licenses and fees of over \$400 a year to hunt and fish in our great state, it will surely lead to further declines in sportsmen, which is plaguing ODF&W to begin with. The whole license fee debacle may lead to a death spiral for the department in which only the rich will be left hunting in Oregon.

The Sports Pac license sure looks like the way to go if you hunt and fish and hunt anything other than deer and elk. The fee is \$130 this year.

With the decrease of Blacktailed deer in Western Oregon, ODF&W has finally started to act, which means hunters on the west side will see shorter seasons and reduced bag opportunities this coming year. Five days have been cut off the end of the rifle season and bow hunters, at the time the regulations were printed, will be able to take only buck deer in 2004. This may change in May, if deer numbers warrant, but I wouldn't hold my breath.

Rifle elk hunters in the Saddle Mountain unit are in for some extra company during the second season. This year's late archery deer season is scheduled to begin on opening day of the rifle season. Tom Thornton, ODF&W's big game coordinator, told me this was a mistake that won't be corrected this year, but will be corrected next year. If having bow hunters in the field during rifle elk hunting season bothers you, I suggest that you give ODF&W a call so they will make sure this mistake is not repeated. I have to feel for the bow hunters since the first seven days of their season will be compromised by us rifle hunters and the rest of it will be during the unit's rifle Cow hunts. Considering the shape of

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