

# The INDEPENDENT

Published on the first and third Thursdays of each month by The Independent, LLC, 725 Bridge St., Vernonia, OR 97064. Phone/Fax: 503-429-9410. Publisher Clark McGaugh, clark@the-independent.net Editor Rebecca McGaugh, rebecca@the-independent.net Assoc. Editor Noni Andersen, noni@the-independent.net

## Opinion

### What is truly important?

It seems a loss of both time and concern occurred at the latest Vernonia city council meeting. Our reporter suffered the loss of time while listening to long-winded debate over waiving or not waiving a relatively minor fee that is required by an ordinance regarding the city's option to buy back unwanted cemetery plots. The owner hadn't even requested that the fees be waived.

The council suffered a loss of concern for wasting time on this issue, then approving a motion to take on a loan of \$25,000 to cover operating costs for the poorly planned Learning Center. They didn't even pause to ask a question or show concern about how, or even if, the Learning Center can provide the \$500 a month to cover the loan. We are not implying that the loan was either good or bad, only that it should have been publicly discussed. If the Learning Center can't pay it back we, the taxpayers, will foot the bill. Is the loan a wise plan at this time? The \$9,600,000 sewer project is already underway and, at this time, there is still only one sure way of paying for it – doubling the current sewer fees, we have been told.

Before the September 18 meeting, some city staff, council members and public took a guided tour of the sewer project. Some present, including Kennedy/Jenks engineer Preston Van Meter and public works employee Jeff Burch, tasted water that was stated to be waste water that had been treated through Level 4. Afterward, information circulated that the water tasted was actually tap water and that the whole thing was a "joke." At the October 2 council meeting, City Administrator Dick Kline took responsibility for the "joke" which, apparently, was orchestrated by a public works employee and Van Meter, for visitors on the waste water facilities tour. Councilor Randy Parrow stated his agreement that he understood it to be a joke, because he said, "Everybody laughed at the time." Others who attended clearly did think it was treated water, as stated. More information is included in the article on the Council meeting in this issue of *The INDEPENDENT*. (Van Meter had not returned our calls by press time.)

What can anyone believe?

We can question authority, but can we believe the answer? Maybe it's all a joke. After all, what is truly important?



### Ike Says . . .

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



Well, did everybody survive the water curtailment? It sounds like the water curtailment notice did save a considerable amount of water according to the water plant personnel; water production at the plant was way down. Thanks for conserving; I'm sure the fish thank you. One thing that was learned though, was that the water curtailment ordinance needs some work and the process of determining the water levels needs to be streamlined. The water curtailment process is supposed to be a graduated approach with the voluntary reduction of water usage being the first level of the ordinance. The new city administrator assured me that he is not going to let this issue go away, change for the better is coming.

On an interesting note, both of the areas that my Father and I visited on our trip to eastern Oregon in August, suffered fires. The one in the Murderers Creek area was especially large and caused concern for residences in the Dayville and Mount Vernon area. This fire burned through areas that we have hunted in the past and three of the camp sites that we have used over the years burnt in the fire. It will be interesting to return to this area in the future to see the dramatic change. While the immediate effects of the fire may be detrimental, the long term bene-

fits will be enormous for wildlife in the area. Mother Nature was showing us who was boss this year; let's hope we learn from this. The cost for the Shaketable fire (Murderers Creek) was \$12.5 million dollars.

Archery hunters owe Longview Fibre Company a big thank you for keeping their lands open for the entire bow season this year. Things got pretty iffy just before the rains fell, but Longview Fibre held tough and kept access open. It was awfully hot for the archers this year and success on the westside of Oregon seemed to suffer more than the eastern half of the state, even though fires curtailed hunting in some areas in the east.

I don't hold out much hope for this year's buck hunting in the Saddle Mountain unit, deer numbers still seem to be suffering, the weather is definitely looking dry for the beginning of the season as I write this article. The 2005 harvest in the Saddle Mountain unit fell back down to only 416 bucks, with a success rate of 15% for hunters. This is a far cry from years past when 1600 bucks were harvested a year and success rates were in the high 20's. There are pockets of deer and those hunters who know about these spots can do well, but overall in the unit things will be slow.

A recent study by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is shedding new light on the damage that cougars are doing to wildlife populations. An innovative new method of tracking elk cows and finding calves at the time of birth

Please see page