

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Been burning garbage for years – why the big fuss?

The backyard burn season is well underway – as anybody can tell by the smell of burning plastic and household garbage all around Vernonia. The only items that are legal to burn are paper, cardboard and yard debris (wood products). Paper and cardboard are better off being recycled.

It is illegal to burn wet garbage, plastic, rubber, and animal or vegetable matter resulting from the handling, preparation, cooking, or service of food. A more comprehensive list is provided with the burn permit.

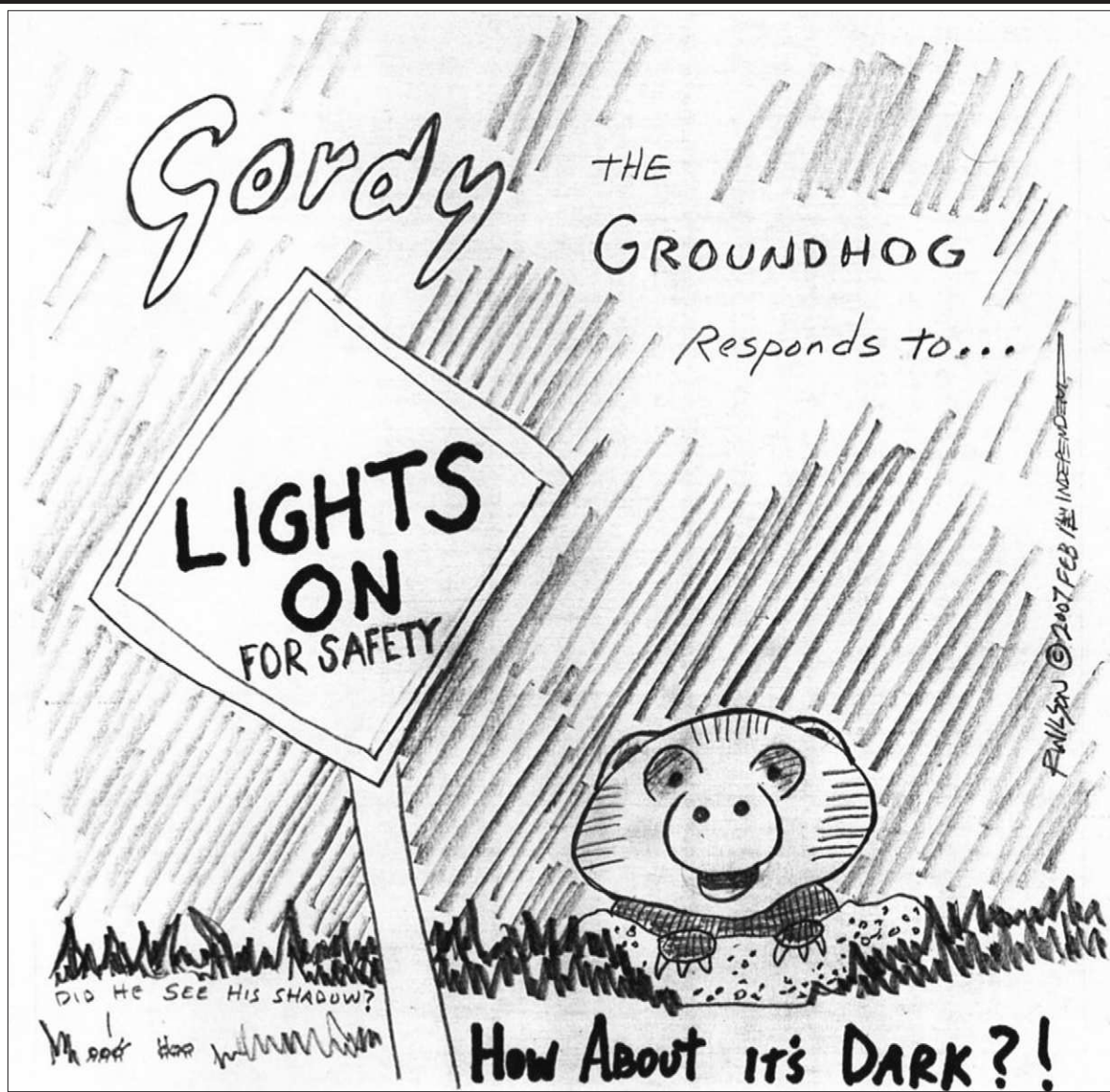
There seems to be a prevailing belief that, since garbage was burned here in the 40s, it should be okay to burn garbage now. Here are some of the toxic (yes, TOXIC) chemicals released in the burning of today's garbage: Bleached paper (such as paper towels) contains chlorine, which releases dioxins when burned; plastic wrap (on meat and other food items) and meat trays can release benzene, formaldehyde, styrene, dioxins and furans; other garbage burning bi-products include carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and heavy metals such as lead, arsenic, mercury, barium, chromium, and cadmium.

Dioxins and furans are known to cause cancer in humans. Mercury has been in the news lately, and the form released into the air is known to be the most toxic. Together, these chemicals can cause everything from mild irritation to serious chronic and deadly diseases. Even if not inhaled directly in the smoke, some can remain in the immediate vicinity, and downwind of the burn area, toxins can remain for decades and gradually work their way into the groundwater. Dioxin is one of the components in Agent Orange – remember that one from the Vietnam era? How about from Love Canal? Yep, the same really bad stuff.

The same really bad stuff happens if garbage is burned in a woodstove or fireplace.

It currently costs less than \$18.00 per month to have garbage hauled away from the curb. Other options are to compost, recycle and take the rest to the transfer station; open twice a month.

People burning garbage are not only endangering their neighbors' health, they are endangering their own health. Call 503-429-8252 to report people burning garbage. PLEASE, DON'T BURN YOUR GARBAGE.



Ike Says

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



Hasn't this winter been interesting? Did everybody survive the wind storm? I was at work the night the wind blew; the drive home was very interesting indeed. Lately I have been making a few forays into the woods and some of the logging roads are a mess. The timber industry took a hit from this wind storm. The good news is that the deer and elk got a little extra to eat when all those trees fell. No they don't eat fir trees, but the moss and lichens that grow in them are prized morsels. With the wind storm came the power outage, at first it was kind of nice, so quiet. Soon, though, the hum of generators took over the calm and staying warm started to be a challenge for some. I find it odd that people forget that they can just put on more clothes to stay warm. Having a barbeque took care of the cooking situation and the oil lamps lit up the dark night. We had a good laugh at work with one of my co-workers; she was trying to cook with a candle at home. Somebody asked her if she had a barbeque, you should have seen the look on her face when she realized the solution for her cooking problem was just out on the deck. Actually it was a good thing that the temperatures were low, my deep freeze did just fine keeping my deer and elk meat frozen. This storm helped reinforce the need for people to be

prepared. Keeping lamps and lamp oil handy, making sure all the propane tanks are full, having stores of food that are non-perishable, warm clothing and bedding all became very important. For those of us who camp while hunting, knowing what to do was just second hand. If all else failed, Dad and I knew we could just pitch the tent, put in the shepherd's stove and be nice and toasty, warm and dry. Having the power off also brought back the old tradition of board games and having fun with friends and family. Of course, having a little bit of beverage to drink only enhanced the fun and took away the chill.

Then the snow came. This year has also been a slick one, I'm sure I have driven more in 4-wheel drive back and forth to work this year than just about any year I can remember. We have not had a lot of snow, but it has been consistent. Snow is not a good thing for deer and elk, it makes finding food for them more energy intensive. Snow on the ground makes it interesting to get out in the woods. Tracks can really tell a person a lot of what is going on. It becomes obvious that elk roam over a wide area and deer seem to hold in small groups in select spots. Then there are the ever roaming coyotes and the occasional bobcat tracks. With all the talk about cougars, I was hoping to find a fresh set of tracks, but I had no luck in that department.

I have been speculating on a new theory of what may have happened to the local deer population. While some people seem to be oblivious to the severe decline in deer numbers, some

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