

## Letters

### FEMA trailers needed for flooded families

To The Editor:

On January 23rd, I witnessed on KATU Channel 2 News a controversy over siting, as I understand it, less than 20 trailers from FEMA on Knott St. I believe I even heard the words "Instant Ghetto". Not so. The temporary housing would be for our families, friends, and neighbors trying to put their lives back together. Keeping families together; working their jobs and repairing their homes. Anyone who has been flooded will understand being cold, wet, muddy and displaced. I think the folks who signed the Knott St. petition are un-informed, ill-advised, and very inhuman (un-charitable).

I hope I will be one of many who will stand up and speak for the unfortunate affected by the flood.

**Rosie McCoy**  
Vernonia

### '60s bridges also add to floods in this area

To The Editor:

The bridges replaced in the 1960s that go over the Nehalem River on Hwy. 47 are being overlooked as a contributing factor in the flooding. The old dairy that has been in my family for 60 years is located between the two bridges causing major flood problems in Vernonia. Both bridges dammed up in 1996 and 2007 and flooded our farm houses. In 1996, the bridge 1.6 miles north of Stoney Point Road dammed up more, flooding the farm houses 1-1/2 feet higher than in 2007. In 2007, the bridge approximately 1/2 mile south of Stoney Point Road dammed up more, causing flood waters to rise and be pushed back toward Vernonia.

More flooding occurred in the area surrounding the storage units south of Vernonia between Lone Pine and Sheely Creek Roads due to the new

bridge and highway built after the 1996 flood. The gully was filled with dirt and rock to make a nice highway, but it also helped create a dam because the water could no longer flow down the gully to the river like it did in 1996.

Do you remember the flood of 1974? The Country Kitchen (the old Pine Cone) and the old School District Office across the street flooded. A Crown Zellerbach employee asked Don Webb to station his log loader on the bridge 1.6 miles north of Stoney Point Road. He pushed the logs and the other debris under the bridge so it would not dam up since they feared it might wash out the bridge. If he had not been there, there would have been more flooding that year.

The history of Vernonia shows some localized flooding with extreme rainfall in their 100 year benchmark, but not to this extent. The old timers knew the possibility of flooding; so many old landmarks were built high. The older bridge construction went over the river (like the green bridge by the Chinese restaurant); whereas, the new bridges were flattened with concrete beams running underneath. This restricts and lessens the water flow under the bridges which makes it more susceptible to damming. Any bridge added or reconstructed, if not high enough with sufficient water flow allowed, can be a potential dam when there is extreme water. In other words, the State of Oregon - Department of Transportation needs to acknowledge and accept responsibility for the engineering design that is creating a flood problem for our community. The State needs to correct and raise the bridges built in the 60's and any new bridge must have sufficient height so water flow is not restricted. Another problem is the debris that builds up in the river. Perhaps, the State of Oregon could assess the river in the fall to see what trees/debris need to be removed.

We believe it is financially unreasonable to expect 200 to 400 homeowners or businesses to raise their buildings since the State of Oregon has created the problem. Many homeowners are not given financial help. Only some receive FEMA

help, and if they do, it usually doesn't pay for everything. This disaster can only depress our area, causing people to lose property value or their homes. Many people are afraid to rent or buy a house that has flooded. We as a community need to contact our senators and representatives: Ron Wyden, 503-326-7525; Gordon Smith, 503-326-3386; David Wu, 503-326-2901; Betsy Johnson, 503-543-4046; Brad Witt, 503-728-4664; Deborah Boone, 503-717-9182 and Ron Kroop with the Oregon Department of Transportation at 503-229-5266. Ask them to address the problem before we have another flood. A petition may be necessary to correct the bridges. If you are interested in helping, please give us a call at 503-429-1620.

Sincerely,

**Stephen and Karen Ellis**  
Vernonia

### Attack on Kline both incorrect and unfair

To The Editor:

To: "Out of My Mind,"

Here we go again. I find it quite disconcerting that Ms. Anderson will write an opinion piece without all the facts and without conversations with the parties involved. Of course she is entitled to her opinion, but, wouldn't it carry more weight and importance if it had been properly researched and information gathered to base her opinion on?

The unabashed dislike and unbridled attack on Former City Administrator, Dick Kline continues. I wonder if tar and feathers and a ride out of town on a rail led by the Independent would be enough to end their verbal blasts.

## Opinion

**From page 2**  
of 2007.

In the same vein, Vernonian Chris Updegrave was one (others, whose names we don't know, also stopped) of the first on the scene of Rob Williams accident (see story page 1) and talked to Williams, kept him from moving before the paramedics arrived and covered him to keep him warm and to ward off shock. Good work, Chris.

The ice, snow and rain are not over yet. Please drive safely, pay attention to temperature, weather conditions, and the state of your equipment (got snow tires?), or you might not be as lucky as Williams was.

I also feel that Ms Anderson and the Independent staff think of themselves as the "6th" member of the City Council of Vernonia by rights of owning a newspaper. When that assumed position is questioned, out comes the poison pens.

It is so easy to sit back in a comfortable chair in front of a computer screen or typewriter and second guess every move and decision the council makes. A suggestion, sprinkle your opinions with some of the admirable things the Council has done and then they won't seem so blatantly biased.

Oh and Noni, weren't you on the panel that chose Mrs. Bassett for City Administrator?

Thank You,

**Sally Harrison**  
Mayor  
Vernonia

### Oregon Rodeo Queen appreciates support

To The Editor:

I just wanted to say thank you so much to everyone who came to the 2008 Columbia County Fair & Rodeo Court and Miss Teen Rodeo Oregon Coronation on January 5th; your support is truly appreciated! It was a night none of us will ever forget and would not have been possible without our families, friends, and sponsors.

I wanted to say a special thank you to everyone who donated money to go towards my Miss Teen Rodeo Oregon saddle. The money would not have been raised without everyone's kindness and support. Thank you SO much!

**Ashley Ekstrom**  
2007 Columbia County  
Queen  
2008 Miss Teen Rodeo  
Oregon

## Ike Says . . .

**From page 2**

compiled new maps, one of which shows high water marks for both the 1996 and 2007 floods. In most cases identical locations had similar highs, with one site that was dramatically different. The Nehalem River near the Airport Bridge was considerably higher during the 2007 flood. In fact, all reports that I have received indicated that the Nehalem River above Vernonia experienced far greater flooding than in '96, and that Rock Creek may have had less flow.

There seems to be some misunderstanding about the stream flow gauges in our area. There are three data-logging gauges in the Nehalem River Basin. The oldest one is the Foss gauge in the lower Nehalem River area, just a short distance above tide water. The next gauge is here in Vernonia at the Rock Creek Bridge; it was installed after the flood of '96 and is maintained by the Oregon Water Resources Department out of Tillamook; this gauge's data is not easily available by the public. The highest gauge in the Nehalem basin is the Clear Creek gauge (near Vernonia on the website) on

the Nehalem River just downstream from the mouth of Clear Creek, which is about 10 miles upstream from Vernonia. This gauge also was placed after the flood of '96; it and the Foss gauge are maintained by the United States Geological Survey department, a federal agency.

The Foss and Clear Creek gauges update at least on the hour and, during higher flows, on the half hour, so the readings are real-time data. For local data, the one to watch is the Clear Creek gauge; the time delay between what the gauge reads and when we will see that level in the Vernonia area is about 5 hours. The USGS maintains a very informative website at <http://or.water.usgs.gov/> and the Clear Creek gauge is the circle in the southwest corner of Columbia County. Just click on the circle and the gauge will open up three charts, one is the stream height, the next is the CFS and the last chart is a rain gauge. For reference, when the gauge height reaches 10 foot in height, we may experience low stream-side flooding in the Vernonia area. The 2007 flood

**Please see page 21**