

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Wildlife viewers bring \$\$\$

A recent press release from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) gave some startling, but welcome, statistics. Of the nearly 2.8 million Oregon residents and nonresidents who fished, hunted, harvested shellfish or went wildlife viewing in 2008, the greatest number (1.7 million) participated in outdoor recreation where wildlife viewing was the planned activity. The good news is that wildlife viewing generates almost as much revenue as the other three activities combined. ODFW tracked expenditures in three categories; travel-generated, local recreation and equipment. Fishing, hunting and shellfishing combined generated just over \$1.4 million, while wildlife viewing alone generated just over \$1 million.

How does little old Vernonia get some of that \$1 million wildlife viewing money? Benign neglect would be one way. That means don't cut the grass on the lake side of the path, leave that area alone for otters, birds, and deer. Then, look for other ways to provide opportunities for wildlife viewing and sit back and reap the dollar rewards.

Please drive very carefully

Now that school is out and summer seems to have arrived, expect to see kids and adults where you would not usually see them, like in roadways. There are also more bicycles and motorcycles on the road and they can be hard to see at times. Please be careful as you go about your summer activities.

VPD fees added at court?

One idea recently brought up at a Vernonia City Council meeting was that of having the Vernonia Justice Court tack a fee onto convictions, with the fee to be used for police training for the Vernonia Police Department (VPD). Scappoose is said to have a fee, though broader in scope, of \$25 for traffic convictions and \$50 for criminal convictions. The problem is the perception, if not the reality, that VPD will make unwarranted traffic stops and arrests to increase revenues. There have been times, all in the past, hopefully, when it wasn't unusual to be stopped for a burned out license plate light only to find that the light was working fine. Do you remember those days? Let's not go back there. We applaud VPD for trying to find ways to reduce their budgetary dependence on General Fund monies, but this doesn't strike us as the right avenue to pursue.



Guest Opinion

By Edward Johnson

In regards to Scott Laird's opinion and report, it appears that I didn't make myself quite clear. This matter is not about whether the police department did anything wrong, it's about ethics. It's common knowledge that cops may legally TASER an individual; however, this was not the question. The real question is plain and simple: Was it necessary? Or was it just plain thuggery? Are these guys so over-weight and out of shape that they can't handle a skinny 135 lb. kid without subjecting him to brutal police tactics? Just because they can! If this is the case then these guys are a disgrace to the uniform and shouldn't be wearing it. Three guys properly trained and in good physical condition should have no problem handling a person of this size. And Scott...we're talking about Vernonia here...not LA, Juarez, or even Hillsboro.

So the answer to Scott's question: "If Not Tasers, What?" The high tech industry has developed some pretty nifty and useful tools; tools that have made some people lazy and dependent causing them to act in a casual, reckless manner. They've made it quite easy for the cop to just pull out the Taser and blast somebody because it's easy. It is true that every cop will have a different perspective as to when it's necessary to use force and what force will be used, but to a certain degree, they still need to restrain themselves. A current example: A cop in Texas who Tasered an irate and belligerent elderly woman. Viewing the video I feel it was unnecessary. She wasn't threatening the cop; the cop towered over

her. He was at least three times larger than her. She was unarmed. But the department found the cop was in the right and did everything according to the book. The woman has a right to exercise her free speech and the cop could have let her vent but he decided to Taser her instead and only because he knew he could legally get away with it; and it was easy. This was all because she refused to sign the traffic citation. There seems to be a need to review the rule book on excessive force / Taser. The cops need to be better trained; they need to know when and how to diplomatically diffuse a situation. They also need to maintain their physical condition so if they do need to get physical, they can, without injury.

In Scott's second point he dismisses my claim as a "silly argument." However, it appears that Scott is suggesting that the actions of the VPD were just and proper; and necessary. Therefore, his dog and child example would imply that every parent or dog owner should use a Taser to control their child or dog instead of an alternative measure, such as diplomacy. I'm quite sure that professional dog trainers have ways of coaxing a dog into a flea treatment without using a Taser. His mention of being kicked or punched by a thirteen-year-old is kind of a ridiculous point that deserves no mention here. Therefore, Scott's point is really rather silly!

Scott pointed out in his article that Mike Kay said that he was aware of four incidents where a TASER was used since the department received them in 2004. I find this rather interesting be-

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