

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Some beneficial events for weary taxpayers

By approving a \$13 million bond issue last fall, Vernonia School District voters demonstrated tremendous faith in the district's plans to raise the remaining \$10-20 million needed to achieve the goal of, not just a new school, but an all new energy efficient campus using sustainable construction methods.

One week ago district Superintendent Ken Cox told the crowd at a Town Hall meeting that NW Natural Gas is the project's first corporate donor, with a gift of \$100,000, and Anne Kilkenny gave \$50,000 to become the first private donor. These two donations, and the continued, multi-faceted support from the State of Oregon, are indications that our faith is well-placed.

The school district has also put up a new website, www.vernoniaschools.org, where up-to-date information will be frequently added and where questions can be asked.

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In one small part of the school district, the Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District received a grant of \$210,000 that will go to the purchase of a new water tender, a vital, and expensive piece of equipment. It is difficult for Rural Fire Protection Districts to fund new equipment when local economic conditions make an increased tax load highly doubtful, and many in the M-BRFPD also voted for the school bond.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant is greatly appreciated.

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Many of the people who were flooded in December 2007 are still waiting for funds to raise their homes. Money used for the lifts that have been completed have been mostly from insurance proceeds and private funds. Constantly changing procedures and/or requirements have frustrated flood victims and those who are trying to help them.

There are hopes that the City of Vernonia Resolution 03-10, which was passed last Monday, will be of some help to flood victims. The resolution states that decks (not just stairs) add value to homes being elevated. This may seem obvious, but hopefully, it will help Unmet Needs Committee work through some rule issues that have arisen about the use of Community Development Block Grant funds for decks.



Ike Says . . .

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



How important is a single word? Well in the case of the words "may" and "shall", pretty darn important, especially if you are a sportsman in Oregon.

During the 75th legislative session, HB 3089 was introduced with the support of the Oregon Hunters Association (OHA). The bill made several significant changes to the amount of fines for illegally taking wildlife, the length of time of license suspensions and when those suspensions would be implemented. The bill passed through both the house and Senate and was signed into law...then somebody actually read it!

For years, people who intentionally act illegally and kill wildlife, have frustrated sportsmen, who are robbed of the opportunity to pursue these animals legally. The courts have many times handed down light sentences and fines, and repeat offenders were quite common. Most sportsmen find it unconceivable that a sportsman could make a mistake time after time; the truth was that these offenders were simply taking advantage of the lack of enforcement and low fines that were comparable to taking a trip out of state to hunt. OHA brought this frustration to the legislature and pushed for changes to help curb

this boorish, illegal behavior. Like many well-intentioned efforts though, the key is in the wording and, somehow, somebody made a big mistake.

497.415. (1) When any person is convicted of a violation of law or any rule adopted pursuant thereto or otherwise fails to comply with the requirements of a citation in connection with such violation as provided in subsection (2) of this section, the court { – may – } { + shall + } order the State Fish and Wildlife Commission to revoke all licenses, tags and permits issued to that person pursuant to the wildlife laws. Revocation of licenses, tags and permits is in addition to and not in lieu of other penalties provided by law.

So do any of you see a problem with the above citation from HB3089? The word "shall" leaves no choice for a judge when a person is cited into court and, since the definition of a violation of law in this section is defined as any offense where the fine is greater than \$50 dollars, which includes all wildlife offenses, then everybody that would have been cited would have their license, tags and permits revoked. The Oregon State Police cite approximately 5,000 people a year in Oregon for fish and game offenses, that would have meant 5,000 people with a revoked license, tags and permits. In addition, the revocation for a first offense is for three years!

While there are some people who believe that every sportsman should follow the laws to the

Please see page 3