

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### Are good things coming?

March, usually a month when very little is going on in Vernonia, has been a month of many new and potentially positive beginnings.

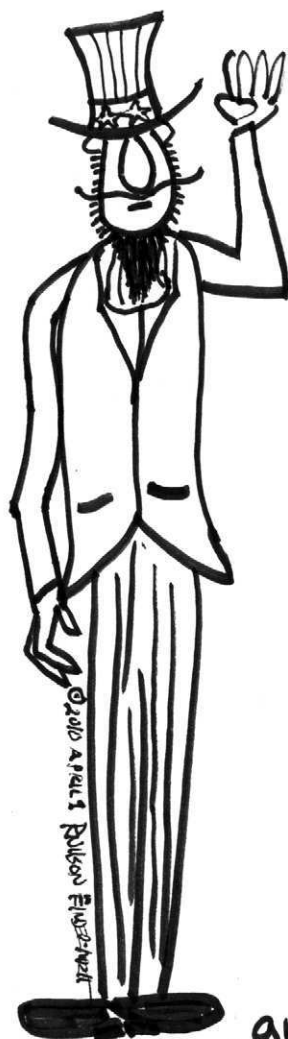
Earlier this year, the City of Vernonia (well, really City Administrator Bob Young) brought Paul Koch to town. Koch is a consultant who has done lots of work with councils on strategic planning, training, downtown development and the like. Koch looked at the five or so 'visioning' efforts that have occurred since 1996 and been shelved, and then spent three days asking questions. He talked to city staff, council and committee (and commission) members, business owners, organization leaders, and community members. Then the meetings started. There have been meetings on the city's vision, mission, and strategic plan. There have been meetings with city staff, council members and downtown business owners.

The results so far have been fairly amazing. After two meetings, he has vision, mission, strategic initiatives, and value statements ready for a final look-through at the April 5 council meeting. These products include lots of statements about working more closely with community, more citizen involvement in council decision-making, listening to citizens, customer service, etc. Once finalized, the statements are scheduled to be adopted at the April 19 council meeting. The proof will be in the pudding, as they say, when we all see if there are any changes in attitude by staff and council as a result of these efforts.

Another area Koch has been working on is downtown revitalization. After meeting with a group of downtown business owners and walking through options and information with Koch, the downtown business owners formed a new Downtown Association to work with the Economic Development Committee and the city on downtown enhancements as part of economic development. Again, it will take a while to see if that good start gives positive results. See related article on page 4.

Another possible beginning came from discussions and presentations by Catherine Mater from the Pinchot Institute in Washington, D.C. (see article on page 1). Wouldn't it be something if Vernonia became a living laboratory for new uses for forest products? After starting out with area pioneers cutting trees to make farm land, then the O-A Mill operating while trees were cut for lumber, becoming a town-wide forest products sustainability project seems somehow like the town coming full circle, with the potential added benefit of a cheap fuel source: pellets made from the unwanted waste wood that is left when forests are logged off or selectively logged for other wood products.

Well, spring and new beginnings go together. Keep watching.



**UNCLE VERN  
 SAYS NO JOKE  
 STAND UP AND  
 BE COUNTED  
 CENSUS 2010  
 DON'T BE AN APRIL FOOL  
 BE A PART OF OUR  
 — COMMUNITY —  
 and get what's coming To us !**

### Ike Says . . .

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



I started my official hunting career in 1968 at the age of 12. I had hunted squirrels and a lot of tweety birds up to that point, but for big game animals in Oregon you had to be 12. My first deer hunt was for Mule deer in the Eastern Oregon Murderers Creek unit and

there were a lot of deer, nobody came home empty handed that year.

Times have changed since 1968. Big game populations are considerably lower across the state with just a few exceptions. Tag numbers are far more restricted, and being able to hunt your favorite unit year after year has long passed. Not being able to hunt in a favorite spot has hurt many family traditions and, in turn, has hurt the introduction of young hunters into the sport.

With this in mind, both sportsmen groups and ODF&W have pushed for more youth hunts and the introduction of mentored hunts. Most of the youth hunts have been late hunts for deer or elk, after the regular hunting seasons, and provided a limited quality hunt on antlerless animals.

The mentoring program opened the door to a better youth opportunity in that an adult provides their tag so a youth could hunt during the regular

season and youth could start at the age of 9. Holding back these youth hunts, however, were low game populations that still made getting youth into great hunts a hard proposition.

The latest addition to youth hunts is an antlerless elk hunt that is spread all across Oregon's hunting units and provides a small number of tags in each unit. To help the success rate and provide more opportunity to youth who are active in school sports programs, the time for most of these youth hunts will run from August 1st to December 31st. At first glance these hunts look like a good deal, then one begins to think. Killing cow elk starting August 1st will put cow elk with calves at risk. Many sportspeople started to question whether this is a wise thing to do. While many of us like to hunt and kill game animals every year, we do not like to see unnecessary suffering of our prey. Making a clean and ethical kill is a goal of any sportsperson, but having a cow hunt that may leave orphan calves behind will almost ensure the calf will die a slow death from starvation.

When ODF&W was questioned about the early hunts, their defense was that there are a lot more early August cow hunts for adults and, to put it bluntly, an indifference to the low number of calves that will be orphaned. Many sportspeople then started to question the necessity of any of these August elk hunts and even the question of harvesting cow elk during the early part of archery season.

Simply put, the new youth hunts were a cata-

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