

Letter - Lafayette officials wrong in citing man for trespass

Published: September 4, 1999

The Lafayette City Council and city administrator have gone too far in forcing their agenda of the watershed clearcut on the people they were elected and hired to represent.

The recent issuance of a citation of trespassing to our neighbor Walter Forster is an indicator of how divisive this issue has become. The forest in the city watershed is public land for the people of our town, which is managed by our elected officials.

Citing Walter for trespassing while he was documenting the current situation in our watershed is not an action that I agree with.

I moved to Lafayette in 1972, and I am very proud of our town and its heritage. The current events are having a negative impact on Lafayette's ability to prosper.

Travis Johnson

416 Sixth St., Lafayette

Letter - Clear-cutting would harm Lafayette's watershed

Published: August 21, 1999

The Lafayette City Council's recent decision to clear-cut more than one-third (45 of 122 acres) of our entire watershed on Red Hill is short-sighted and, if carried out, bodes ill for Lafayette's future water supply.

Contrary to a councilor's claim that the city's majority support the plan, it took only a short time for me and a few friends to gather approximately 400 signatures in opposition. In going door-to-door, we found many who expressed disbelief, shock and even anger at the council's decision. We did not reach whole sections of the city.

When a temperate rain forest is destroyed by clear-cutting, a watershed is greatly reduced in its capacity to retain humidity, moisture and rainfall.

Watersheds need lots of big, old, moss-covered, water-retaining trees, along with fern, salmon berry, wild cucumber and the whole lush and varied water-dispensing flora.

In addition to the primary function of providing fresh and plentiful water for a human population, it also provides wildlife habitat. In the heat of summer, a cool, shaded forest reduces evaporation and prevents water loss.

The deep, rich forest preserves the rains of fall, winter and spring, and it prevents erosion, siltification and mudslides.

The smaller a watershed, like Lafayette's, the more important it is to preserve it intact in order to insure the maximum retention of water. The pitch of trees on the watershed's steep 30-degree slopes indicate unstable

soils and earth movement. The likely result of clear-cutting is mudslides. It simply does not make sense to place Lafayette's 100-year-old watershed heritage in jeopardy for a temporary sitting-government's expedient claim of fiscal need. With water rates the third highest in the state and a \$2 million revenue bond, the city has more than enough money for infrastructure repair. All agree that the city's old, rusting iron pipes must be replaced; however, the majority of residents do not believe that the way to do so is by destroying the watershed forest itself. With an expanding population, Lafayette cannot afford the loss of water that would result from the clear-cutting. The approved clear-cut is poor watershed management practice and is simply unjustifiable. It is incumbent, in the light of broad-based community opposition, for city officials to reconsider the present plan for deforestation of the people's watershed.

Walter B. Forster

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etter - Grant reasonable access to Lafayette watershed

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The Lafayette watershed conflict this summer illustrates that not only do people need a healthy watershed, but the watershed needs people. The principal guarantee of the old forest's future protection is an informed and educated community. Knowledge of the forest's essential role in the proper functioning of the whole watershed system is crucial to its preservation. In order for people to be fully aware, reasonable access should be allowed.

Our watershed forest is a prime capital asset in and of itself. It serves maximum utilitarian value as an intact, preserved resource. Clearcutting degrades its viability and must end.

Under the gavel of Mayor Theresa Syphers and pursuant to the greater public interest and good, it is within city council's authority as official grantor to cease the logging operation post-haste, subject to lawsuit.

Pay the loggers to leave. All that is required is a courageous majority. Let the will of the council reflect the will of the community. Then may green branches and homage fall to wise government.

The rapprochement between community leader Kathy Futornic and city administrator Robert Willoughby shows a way of intelligent cooperation. Their mutual working effort to find alternative funding is a positive development and should be acknowledged.

We all share the same community here and must return to our homes as neighbors. So let's conserve the remaining watershed forest and together discover other means to update the infrastructure.

Let the loggers return to their own homes and communities far from here.

Let's account for the profits, and then equanimity and peace may return to the city and to the Lafayette watershed commons.

Walter B. Forster

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Letter - Compromise in watershed gives Lafayette an Allee

Published: October 2, 1999

Cliff Barnhart, logging survey engineer and consultant , extended his hand on

Sept. 23. I reached to shake it. City Administrator Robert Willoughby carried the Allee peace trees proposal. (Allee is a French word meaning a tree-lined street or pathway.) I handed each of them a letter, supporting the resolution, written by persuasive Cheryl L. Springer, wife of forest-wise Jim Springer.

Also present was the outspoken and indomitable Marianne Mitchell. Suddenly, we were joined by Randy Hubbard, head of public works. Then we headed to Lafayette's watershed forest to sculpt the people's Allee from an area otherwise to be clearcut.

At the trail's entrance, we paused to debate, reason and persuade. As we trod the forest path, we negotiated. Which tree will be saved to make the Allee and which will be sacrificed to pay for the replacement of the rusted inner-city water pipes?

As we went down a road leading to the new well 10, Barnhardt seemed to have a designation in mind. And then we all saw it - a giant fir, perhaps the largest in the forest. There was no protest as Barnhart painted the trunk orange to preserve it from the loggers' saws. It is older than each of us and, perhaps, older than all of us combined. We agreed this grandfather of the wood deserves to stand. Could it be as old as Lafayette? Oh, ecstasy. Willoughby asked Barnhart the likely price of a particular fir, as he emphasized the potential revenue for the city. Marianne and I argued its poetic value for the Allee. In this way, art and commerce combined to produce reasoned compromise.

The feeling was good all around. Together we managed to save 57 trees, all marked with Cliff's orange paint. In future summers, a weary hiker in search of natural respite may find shade here. Thanks, Robert; thanks, mayor; thanks

council, Cliff and loggers for exercising great care to protect the people's new Allee.

Now let's replace the infrastructure and preserve the remaining watershed forest.

Walter B. Forster

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Letter - Clearcutting diminishes benefits from watershed

Published: March 11, 2000

Several summers ago when returning from camping in the Nestucca, we stopped at the McMinnville watershed outside Carlton. The sun was rising as I poked around a clearcut hillside; there was not a cloud in the sky. Increasingly warm, I approached a pristine old forest for shade.

As I entered, it suddenly began to rain. Bewildered, I stepped back into the arid clearcut and searched the sky. Still, not a cloud in sight. Where was the rain coming from? Not from the sky. I searched for a clue while following an elk trail and it became clear why and from where the mysterious rain fell.

The towering old trees had pierced the night's damp clouds, caught the mist and held the morning dew until, saturated, they released this moisture. These forests not only collect rain, they literally produce their own rainfall.

Water that is not absorbed is filtered and dispensed into streams and creeks, pure flowing springs and groundwater.

Clearcutting these old forests eliminates this unique water-generative function and reduces water purity. Clearcutting is an antiquated and destructive watershed management practice. These old temperate rain forests

are nature's most efficient water production and filtration system. New seedlings are no substitute.

McMinnville's old watershed forest (that remains) is essential to ensure a high-quality water source into the future. It also has great value as wildlife habitat and a potential source for recreational opportunities.

McMinnville residents should not have to drive to the beach or Mt. Hood to get away when there is this wonderful wilderness right in their own backyard.

It's time to remove the padlocked gates to allow the people to see just how their own forest is being used.

Steven Harloff, (Readers' Forum, March 4) who criticized McMinnville's watershed policies, is right to state, "McMinnville residents, awake."

Walter B. Forster

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