

I'm Nancy Webster and I represent North Coast Communities for Watershed Protection, a grassroots group with over 700 members. ***I would like to address what happens when a watershed, such as the Jetty Creek watershed near Rockaway Beach, is 95% clearcut.***

I grew up in Coos County on the Oregon coast during the '50s and '60s. My father worked for Weyerhaeuser as a lumber grader. He was very concerned that they were over-logging and that this was not sustainable. My mother thought that the timber companies were not paying their fair share in taxes and that the jobs they provided were becoming more and more automated. I understand now that they both were right. Back then, in negotiations with the union over wages, Weyerhaeuser always pleaded hardship as to why they could not pay more, but later we learned they had record profits.

After retiring, I returned to the Oregon coast, to Rockaway Beach, a small coastal town bordered by private industrial forestland. About ten years ago, my neighbors and I watched clearcutting of the very steep forested hillsides within the Jetty Creek watershed, the source of drinking water for Rockaway Beach. We learned that Jetty Creek is a 1400-acre watershed and that at that time, Stimson Lumber owned the upper half and Olympic Resource Management owned the lower half. (Several years ago the lower half was sold to Greenwood Resources.)

A friend and I hiked into the Jetty Creek watershed and we were dismayed to see very large clearcuts on extremely steep slopes, including logged over wetlands and headwater streams. We talked with two loggers who were working that day and they said that that type of logging was not good for our drinking water source. They warned us that next the timber company would aerial spray the clearcuts with pesticides.

About the same time, notices came with my Rockaway Beach water bill that alerted me that the drinking water had exceeded the EPA limits for total trihalomethanes (TTHM), known cancer-causing chemicals. Logging can increase mud flow in streams and when more chlorine is added to treat this muddy water, trihalomethanes, chlorine bi-products, are formed. Between 2004 and 2014, Rockaway Beach had to issue more alerts for TTHM violations than any other coastal community. This correlates with the period where 83 percent of the watershed was clearcut.. most logged

My neighbors started talking with each other about these TTHM warnings, the clearcutting, and the aerial spraying of pesticides. We started meeting together and trying to learn more and eventually, we formed a group that became North Coast Communities for Watershed Protection. We were joined by people from other communities that were also facing expensive damage to their watersheds and the consequent water insecurity, as you heard earlier today about Wheeler and Corbett. Small towns cannot ill afford the increased costs of treating drinking water that results from the detrimental effects of industrial forestry.

Our group talked about these issues with city and county employees, as well as elected officials. We spoke at public meetings. We talked with the Oregon Department of Forestry, the Department of Environmental Quality, and members of the Governor's staff. But none of these agencies (were able) offered any significant help or protection. We believe most state workers want to protect the public water supplies, but are hampered by political pressure and industry.

We met with the foresters and managers of the private timber companies that owned the Jetty Creek watershed. They told us that this clearcutting was legal under Oregon Forest Protection Act regulations. We asked how our drinking water can be protected, but they said that this is "investment logging" and that their first priority is to provide a profit to the company and stockholders.

We began to realize how serious a public health issue clearcutting, slash burning, and pesticide spraying are to our drinking water watersheds. We understood that these practices threaten our air quality, water quality, and water quantity. And we understood that these practices are not good for forest habitat, including the water endangered fish depend on.

Today, the Jetty Creek watershed that Rockaway Beach depends on has been severely compromised. In the past seventeen years, about 95% of this watershed has been logged. According to Dr. Trygve Steen, a professor at Portland State University and an expert on forestry practices, that watershed has unprotected headwater streams and inadequate buffers bordering the main stream below very steep slopes. That logging may have been legal under the OFPA; however those regulations are very inadequate to insure source water protection. It's reasonable to question whether the Jetty Creek watershed will be a viable water source for Rockaway Beach in the future.

I have friends who work in the logging industry. These friends tell me they have never seen such high levels of logging as are happening today, and they tell me that these practices are not sustainable and not good for the drinking water nor the fish. Also, they are very concerned about the harmful effects of pesticide spraying.

I have read in the paper and various trade publications that lumber prices are at historic high levels, and so are profits. I have read that imported lumber from Canada is subject to high United States' tariffs, further protecting and benefitting the large corporations who own and log land in Oregon. Right now, the number of new housing starts and home improvement projects is way up, while financing rates for new homes is low. Timber companies are cutting and cutting, and charging high prices. According to the National Association of Homebuilders, and Random Lengths - a trade industry publication that tracks prices - framing lumber prices have skyrocketed 180% since last year.

After ten years of watching our watersheds being extensively clearcut, resulting in seriously compromised water quality and quantity, and after being frustrated about the lack of accountability from both public agencies and private timber companies, those of us with North Coast Communities for Watershed Protection, and others, created the Rural Citizens Timber Tax Fairness concept. We strongly believe that our drinking water is in jeopardy. We want to address both the issues of the lack of fair timber taxation and inadequate Oregon regulations to protect drinking water. For at least three decades, timber companies have not been required to pay their fair share of taxes to pay for essential Oregon county services. It is time to open a conversation about this. We believe it is time to reinstate a tax on cut timber which would go to the counties to address the damage being done to our communities. These tax funds could help to fund basic services, watershed restoration, and wildfire preparedness. Now seems like a good time to ask the timber companies to pay their fair share of taxes.

Just as sixty years ago when my parents believed the private timber companies' industrial forestry practices were not sustainable, that they were not paying their fair share of taxes, and that they were claiming financial hardship, all of these things are still true today. My hope is that we can learn from what happened to the Jetty Creek watershed and advocate for strong drinking

water source protections, so this sort of thing does not continue to happen in other communities. Our future depends on healthy forests providing safe and abundant drinking water.

Nancy Webster