

## Another revised version of Betsy McMahon's letter (Betsy Call Me971-386-3788)

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Date: Friday, February 12, 2021, 06:48 AM PST

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To the Editor:

"Water Is Life" says a sign in my neighbor's yard. This quote brought me to realize that the lives of people in North Coast communities are in jeopardy, because our drinking water sources are under attack. Many previously-forested areas which provide our sources of drinking water are now bare acres of stumps. These are areas that have not only withstood clearcutting, but areas that have been sprayed with potentially harmful chemicals which can run off into streams that feed our watersheds and are the sources of our drinking water.

This past year alone has had glaring incidents of clean water threats: first, was the pesticide spraying of a huge clearcut less than a half-mile from Nehalem Elementary School; next, were the massive clearcuts and pesticide spraying immediately above the town of Wheeler; then, were the clearcuts on steep slopes above both East Foley Creek and the Trask River, salmon-spawning streams; and finally, the Jetty Creek watershed recently lost a large area of older trees (in an area known as Olympic Line) due to clearcut logging by Stimson Lumber. (Jetty Creek provides water to Rockaway Beach, where a new multi-million dollar water filtration system had to be built at community expense a few years ago due, in part, to damage to the watershed caused by clearcuts.) On about two weeks notice, Olympic Line was due to be clearcut starting in early December 2020. Since this short notice was given right before the long Thanksgiving Day weekend, those of us with North Coast Communities for Watershed Protection (NCCWP) asked people to write letters to the Oregon Department of Forestry requesting more time for public comment and investigation before the operation was considered for approval. Amazingly, 110 people wrote to ODF, probably more letters than they have ever received regarding a logging operation. Unfortunately, in spite of everyone's remarkable efforts and the large public outcry, no time extension was granted and Stimson was allowed to proceed with the clearcutting of Olympic Line. That was one of the last vestiges of older trees that remained in the Jetty Creek watershed.

All of our coastal watersheds are potentially in danger from the timber companies that log ever more aggressively while reaping the benefits of tax cuts that have cost coastal counties at least \$3,000,000,000. In many cases, the profits from logging are funneled to Wall Street real estate investment trusts that have profited at the expense of rural communities. In the past, for decades, private timber owners were required to pay a severance tax on the value of the trees they logged, but starting about 1994, that tax was eliminated by the Oregon Legislature. So today, monies that the counties need for education, roads, and other infrastructure have evaporated

North Coast Communities for Watershed Protection is working to shine a brighter light on what is happening to the quality and quantity of drinking water for our coastal residents. Unlike Portland that has its primary source of water in the protected Bull Run Reservoir, down here we do not have the assurance that our water sources will be protected. The laws governing forestry practices in Oregon are much more lax than in Washington, Idaho, and California, largely because of the strong influence of lobbyists for the forestry industry. Our legislators, including the Tillamook County Commissioners, as well as the Oregon Board of Forestry, need to take responsibility for this situation. They need to work

for the *people* of Oregon in demanding that *our* drinking water be safe and free from toxic chemicals and the detrimental effects of clearcut logging. Water is Life.

Betsy McMahon  
Manzanita, Oregon

NCCWP can be contacted at: [healthywatershed.org](http://healthywatershed.org).