

## Wall Street Loggers vs The Jetty Creek Watershed

On a fall morning in 2012, Maia steps outside of her sea view home in Wheeler, Oregon. Soon she feels a fine, cloying, mist in the air. Not like the wisps of ocean fog. It smells artificial, stings her eyes, and exposed skin. Soon she feels nausea. A clinic sits at the end of her road. She walks as fast as she can. The discomforting feelings of her body are escalating, panic building. She passes a nursing home where a few of the residents are sitting on the porch. She can almost see the drifting menacing haze over their parking lot. It respects no boundaries. Stumbling into the clinic, an admitting nurse jettisons from behind her desk to help this woman who stumbles in and faints in the reception room.

A pitch for a new horror movie or nail-biting novel?

Nope, just business as usual in the timber world as choreographed by the Wall Street loggers cutting Oregon's coastal forests - Stimson, Weyerhaeuser, Campbell Global, Greenwood Resources, and others. Most are on the stock exchange, working for their investors. It's a high stakes game leaving towns without potable water and people dusted with herbicide. Illness creeps through a once verdant paradise, thanks to the lax regulations of the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) who oversees the fir forests of eight counties kissing the Pacific Coast of Oregon.

The ODF considers this an Industrial Forest, despite the fact that the citizens of Rockaway and Twin Rocks have only one water source, Jetty Creek, within it. Which now, is deforested and laced with pesticides. Silting up the filters in the water treatment facility, which causes the water to look like chocolate milk. More than normal chlorine is used in this situation but results

in trihalomethane (THM). The allowable limit of THM in drinking water is defined by the Environmental Protection Agency. The City of Rockaway Beach has frequently exceeded that limit in the past two and a half years.

Clear cutting in a watershed is generally acknowledged to cause turbidity. When it rains heavily it's hard to make the water drinkable. There are other watersheds in Oregon located in the commercial forests. Oceanside water district, just down the road, is looking at a similar fate.

Private foresters of an investment firm, Greenwood Resources, own the land around where the Jetty Creek watershed is located now. But Stimson Lumber contractors cut the trees. Stimson, Greenwood Resources, and the ODF insist the law was followed. So the pleas and sensible urgings of the people of Rockaway and Twin Rocks fall on deaf ears.

Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska have much tougher protections, but it's easier to cut more logs in Oregon because of shorter stream buffers and the pressure the Oregon Forest and Industry Council (OCFIC) puts on the ODF to keep the rules to a minimum.

Down playing the fact of their involvement, The OCFIC placed ads on Oregon broadcasting stations. Pictures of verdant forests and clear running streams do not reflect the decimation occurring on the Oregon Coast of factory farmed sterile timberlands with no concern for, watersheds, institutions, or cities over the past six years.

Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) drafted a report, which identified logging as a contributor to known risks for drinking water quality in communities up and down

the Oregon coast. A flurry of emails and letters ensued from various state agencies and environmental organizations about the Jetty Creek watershed. A movie was produced detailing the difficulties, *Behind the Green Curtain\**. Students of Deke Gunderson's, at Pacific University, researched the pesticides used. Complaints are registered, but the ODF insists the rules are being followed.

Josh Seeds wrote the original source water report, *The DEQ Water Source Protection Guide*, which the Oregon Coast Forestry and Industries Council demanded that it not be published. A report by Tony Schick on Oregon Public Broadcasting about the watershed was canceled after pushback and charges of anti-logging bias from the timber industry lobbies and the ODF, according to interviews and public records. <https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-private-forests-to-water-quality-risks/>

The recent Oregon Mid and North Coast Water Monitoring Summit involved state and federal natural resource agencies, tribes, watershed councils, municipalities, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD's), conservation and research groups, and others which collect water monitoring data throughout the Mid and North Coast region of Oregon. Important water related questions remain at multiple levels. Needed is a strategic, focused, and efficient approach.

Issues, such as the Jetty Creek watershed disaster and the currently inadequate Oregon forestry laws, which have no concern for the human populations within which they co-exist, have brought a strong focus on what has to be remedied in water quality issues. If we are to transition to a restoration economy, the goal is that the Summit will help identify roles, responsibilities, areas of expertise, and new opportunities for collaboration so we can move forward.

Monitoring is the eyes and ears of science. In 2015 the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) started monitoring ground water throughout the state, thanks to legislative funding. Fourteen pesticides were tested, as well as pharmaceuticals, and bacteria. The program is ongoing. One of the speakers, a ground water expert from the DEQ, Paige Evans, spoke about testing wells in Gearhart and Clatsop Plains.

Naturally occurring arsenic is present in volcanically formed geology, specifically basalt, which is deposited all over the coast. Some wells in Gearhart were tested for it. Both areas had high nitrates in the water. But the astonishing fact, at least to me, was that due to the unique geology of Clatsop Plains, they have the capacity to get one hundred gallons per minute out of a well.

In conclusion Evans noted; some chemicals were detected at very low points. Contaminates such as nitrates, arsenic, manganese, and bacteria exceeded health screen levels, especially in the area North of Gearhart. Her recommendations were for long-term monitoring in the Clatsop Plains area, North of Gearhart, and for well owners to test their wells regularly.

Ocean acidification and shellfish culture was covered as well a talk by the Wild Salmon Center representative, Mark Trenholm, on how current forestry logging rules are hurting salmon populations. One scientist, Evan Hayduk, remarked that sculpins should replace salmon as an indicator species for streams, because they are pickier eaters. Meaning they are a better measuring instrument to show the water body is lacking in sustainable nutrients.

Oceanside City Commissioner Dr. Paul Newman's presentation focused on the potential fate of following in Rockaway Beach's footsteps. He queried:

- Is current monitoring/testing of surface-derived drinking water for contamination by herbicide spraying adequate?
- Is there one single agency responsible for monitoring spraying in forested watersheds that provide drinking water?
- Are there co-operative procedural changes that can enable the prudent use of herbicides while still protecting potentially exposed surface water systems?
- Is the relationship between forest landowners and users of surface water therein, necessarily an adversarial one?

Ultimately, Oceanside participated in an experiment between Stimson and their Oceanside Water District (OWD), jointly funded by the DEQ/Oregon Health Authority and OWD.

Monitoring and working synchronously with spraying operators to notify them a week before spraying so reservoirs may be filled to capacity. A day before the procedure, the water district is notified. They close the surface derived intake pipe and switch to the reservoir supply.

Individual grab samples will be taken every two hours following the spraying over the next forty-eight hours. In addition, a second sampling, A Polar Organic Chemical Integrated Sample System is inserted a week before the spraying. All samples from these two operations will be sent to one centralized laboratory operated by the State of Oregon.

Commissioner Newman concludes that surface derived drinking water is not correctly monitored at present. One random sample every three years is not adequate. Visual surveillance of over spraying observations, which don't kill vegetation, may still be enough to contaminate drinking water. Testing should also include all herbicides used in a forestry operation within the watershed.

Over two days, there were twenty-three presentations, break out sessions, and a panel discussion. Subjects varied from near/shore estuaries, water quality and quantity to habitats for fish and aquatic life, land use and streamside habitat conditions. Break out groups explored questions on all the categories afore mentioned. A panel of representatives from each group gave a summation the second day on recommended suggestions and solutions.

It was generally agreed to co-ordinate and make consistent data resources available throughout all agencies. Possibly work towards one State and one Federal agency for water quality testing. Human interagency relationships need be established, as well as reaching out to the timber companies.

Ask questions such as; Are regulations adequate to protect water quality and beneficial uses? How effective are management and restoration actions? And establish a website to share information from and about events like this seminar. It was agreed by all constituents that a yearly conference from the STREAM Team was necessary to share progress.

\*Available on utube

Thanks for reference materials for this article go to Nancy Weber and Bob Larson of Rockaway, Oregon, Dr. Paul Newman of Oceanside, Oregon, and various organizers and participants of the conference hosted by – Oregon's Strategic Approach to Monitoring, The STREAM Team.

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