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VERNONIA'S voice
reflecting the spirit of our community

free

Vernonia Schools Announce Distance Learning Plan for Start of 2020-21 School Year

School year will start September 21 and will feature no in-person learning for the first quarter

Vernonia School District Superintendent Aaron Miller presented the School Board with the District's Operation Plan for re-opening this fall under COVID restrictions. The District plan, which the Oregon Department of Education has required from all Districts, was provided to the Board at their August 13 meeting, and calls for all students to learn remotely with no in-class instruction for at least the first quarter of the school year, which ends in early November.

Miller said state metrics for COVID cases is driving the need to restrict on-site instruction. He said the District not only needs to meet those metrics for Columbia County, but also for Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas counties because several instructors that work in the District live in those counties.

The Board approved a request from Miller to adjust the school year calendar, with the first day of school pushed back another week to September 21. Miller said instructors need more time to prepare for the Distance Learning model they will be teaching this year, and also provides a week for teachers to hold conferences with parents and students to prepare them for Distance Learning.

The District's re-opening plan includes the following:

- Chromebooks have been purchased for all students
- wireless hotspots, wifi, or satellite internet connections will be provided for families that need it
- daily meals will be provided for all students
- there will be limited on-site learning available for some students for evaluations, testing, and assistance if needed
- daily attendance will be taken
- grades will be given for course work
- special education will be provided
- the District has a hybrid learning plan in place which includes physical distancing and other needed measures for when on-site learning is allowed to begin again

Miller said, while some Oregon schools are allowing students to participate in athletic team practices, Columbia County does not meet the metrics to allow this at this time.

Miller said the District will attempt to remain flexible during the school year as they assess whether they are able to change the way instruction is delivered, but will wait until the end of the first quarter before re-evaluating their position.

Vernonia Cares Moves In to New Building!

The Vernonia Cares food pantry began operations in their new facility at 547 Weed Avenue on Tuesday, August 11.

It was a thrilling and historic moment when the first order of food rolled out the door, especially for Cares Executive Director Sandy Welch, who has been waiting 19 years for this day to arrive.

"Exciting! Exciting!" said Welch on the first day in the new building. "It's clean, it's new, and it's ours!"

Vernonia Cares formerly operated from the American Legion Hall, so having a building of their own is a new concept for Welch and her staff, and has been a long time coming. "My first official meeting as the Director of Vernonia Cares food pantry was about a new facility, and that was 19 years ago," said Welch. "So, that's how long I've been working on this, and it was in motion before I started."

The new facility is owned by the City of Vernonia, and will be leased to its two tenets, Vernonia Cares and the Vernonia Senior Center. The facility was built using $2 million in federal Community Development Block Grant funds.

Vernonia Cares now has their own loading dock, which makes the chore of unloading their freight deliveries much easier; at their old location freight was delivered to the sidewalk in front of the building and then moved by hand truck up a ramp and into the warehouse. "We even have a pallet jack," added Welch with obvious delight; the pallet jack was donated by Vernonia City Councilman J.R. Allen.

Cares Executive Director Sandy Welch pulling orders for clients in their new warehouse.

Vernonia Cares now has their own loading dock. At the old location freight was delivered to the sidewalk in front of the building and then moved by hand truck up a ramp and into the warehouse.

The new facility has two large walk-in cooler units, one refrigerated and one a freezer. They also moved five freezer units from their old facility. Welch says they have new carts for moving food orders,

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The Timber Industry of Today Part 1 – Logging in Oregon

By Scott Laird

Oregon is home to some of the biggest and fastest growing trees anywhere, making logging and the timber industry a big part of the economy. Even after the shutdown of the Oregon-American Lumber Company, Vernonia still considers itself a logging town. In this 3 part series we take a look at the timber industry from a number of angles – what does logging look like today and how has it changed over the years; who owns Oregon's forestlands; how are Oregon's timberlands managed and regulated; and who benefits from the timber industry.

For over 30 years, from the early 1920s to the mid-1950s, the Oregon-American Lumber Company was the heart and soul of the Vernonia community. With high quality timber holdings in the surrounding Nehalem River Valley and a large electric powered saw mill, Oregon-American employed hundreds of locals in their logging camps, on railroad and trucking crews, at the saw mill, and in their sales force.

The mill closed in 1957, but you can still see the historic remnants of Vernonia's milltown heyday, most notably at the old mill pond where logs were held before processing at the mill and the large concrete chip shed which was used to store sawdust for fuel.

The Oregon-American operation, or O-A as locals like to call it, turned Vernonia, originally settled by farmers, into a western boomtown. Before the mill started operations in 1924, Vernonia's population was minuscule – the 1920 census counted just 142 residents – but by 1930 that number had soared to 1,625, and Vernonia was considered the fastest growing town in Oregon. The census in 1960 following the mill's closure saw a drop of over 400 people from the previous count 10 years earlier.

O-A decided to operate a large saw mill in the backwoods of Vernonia because it was home to some of the largest and best old-growth Douglas fir timber found anywhere in the world, and O-A owned some of the best stands of it. Considered one of the largest lumber producers on the West coast, the O-A mill was capable of turning out 180 million board feet of lumber in a year when running at full capacity.

By the 1950s most of the old growth timber had been logged around the Vernonia region and the remaining

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timber became difficult to reach. In 1953 the Long-Bell Lumber Company, another massive operation in the Northwest, purchased O-A. In August 1957 the last logs arrived at the Vernonia mill pond and on December 20 the mill shut down for good.

Vernonia still considers itself a logging town, but without the O-A mill, things are different now.

Who Owns the Trees

Logging in Oregon has changed since the days of the O-A Lumber Company. But one thing that hasn't changed much is who owns the land, and the trees that grow there.

In the 1920s O-A was successful because they owned large stands of Doug fir, including the massive DuBois Tract, which included over 22,000 acres of prime timberland west of Vernonia in Clatsop County.

Today the names have changed, but the land is still owned by large companies – Weyerhaeuser, Rayonier, Hancock Forest Management, Longview Fiber. What has really changed is the way those companies that own the trees operate. When O-A was here they logged the trees, transported them, milled them into products, and sold them. Today the large corporations own the land and trees and reap the profits from the harvests. Yes, they provide some jobs, but not to the same extent O-A did.

According to the Oregon Forest Resource Institute, nearly half of Oregon's total 63 million acre area is considered forestland, and Oregon is the country's number one producer of both dimensional lumber and plywood.

Of Oregon's 30 million acres of forests, 60% of it is owned by the federal government, but this federal land only accounts for 13% of timber harvest in 2019. 22% of Oregon's forests are owned by large (properties of 5,000 acres or more) private owners, 12% is owned by small (less than 5,000 acres) private landowners, and 4% is owned by the state and other public entities. But, despite owning just 22% of timberlands, those large private owners account for 66% of harvested timber in the state, while small landowners harvest just 12%.

Harvests on federally held lands started dropping significantly in the 1980s, from a high of over 4 billion board feet annually, to around 500 million today. Meanwhile harvests on large privately held lands have remained stable during that time period, hovering between 2 and 3 billion board feet each year.

Here in Columbia County the numbers are significantly different. 88% of the county's 420,000 acres are forested. Of that total acreage, just 5% is held by federal (2%) or state (3%) entities, while 61% is held by large private owners and 34% is held by small owners. Again, the large owners make up the bulk of the harvest with 80%, while small landowners take 13% of the harvest. The total harvest in Columbia County in 2017 was 177 million board feet.

In 2017 the forest sector supported a total of 61,000 jobs in Oregon in areas that include forest management and support, primary forest products (pulp and paper, sawmills and wood production, and veneer, plywood and engineered wood), secondary forest products (doors, windows, kitchen cabinets and countertops, manufactured homes, wood buildings, pallets, furniture, etc.), and transport and distribution. In Columbia County timberlands create 856 jobs, 6% of the workforce, which pay an above average annual wage of $51,487. In its heyday O-A alone employed around 800 people.

Who Does the Harvesting

In a town known for logging Mike Pihl is undoubtably Vernonia's best known logger. A mainstay on the History Channel's reality television show *Ax Men* for five seasons, Pihl is also known locally for his work in the community – if there is a cause that needs assistance you can bet Mike Pihl is involved in some way. "Anything for Vernonia" is his patent response when he's asked to help.

But besides his TV celebrity and community work, Pihl is first and foremost a logger. He has run his own company, Mike Pihl Logging, for the last 38 years, and he currently employs around 22 people. Pihl works almost exclusively on small, private timberlands in Oregon, from Astoria to Mt. Hood. "Our average clear cut is about 10 acres," explains Pihl. He says the largest cut his outfit did last year was about 60 acres. "We have our own niche in the industry."

Pihl says the way his crews operate while on a job is extremely important to him. "We take a lot of pride in our work. When we come in to do a job, we're in someone's neighborhood and they feel like those trees belong to them, even if the trees are not on their property. So I make sure I knock on everyone's door, let them know what's going on, and ask if they have any problems with the property line. But we'll still get some backlash from the neighbors. We have a lot of personalities we have to deal with. We're really concerned about our public image, that's really important for us."

Work for Pihl is often market driven. "We don't want to cut someone's trees when the prices are down. Sometimes we just go in and take poles, sometimes we just take the cedar, sometimes we take the whole thing because the trees have reached maturity. We just finished a 100 acre thinning job by Astoria on a stand that is 41 years old. It's been in the family for three generations. If the market picks up they might take five acres a few years from now. So, we do what the landowner wants and what the timber markets are doing."

Replanting following a clear cut is required and is almost always done with Douglas fir, says Pihl "We've tried to replant western red cedar, but one herd of elk going through will pull them all out, or one really hot day in the summer and they'll all die. Douglas fir is hearty, it's native, it's resilient. All the other species are pretty fragile when you replant them."

A recent forest thinning done by Mike Pihl Logging

Pihl says, rather than entering into a competitive bid process for logging jobs, he generally negotiates a price directly with the property owner. "We're noted for doing a very good job, so 99% of our jobs are negotiated, because people know the kind of work we do, we find the highest markets, and we care about the neighbors."

Once the trees have been cut, Pihl says he arranges for them to be shipped to 30 different designations, depending on the species of the trees, grade and lengths of the logs, and prices in the markets. He uses his own drivers to haul logs and also subcontracts with drivers with their own trucks. "A lot of times we'll have up to a dozen different designations on one job," he explains. "Next time you see a load of logs going down the road, take a look and you'll notice either all the logs are uniform in either length, diameter, or species. Everything has its own designation." Pihl says he finds the right markets and the logs are sold to the mill. Once the logs are processed by the mill, the landowner and Pihl Logging receive a share of the profit from the mill.

"If we ever run low on work, I just get out and start knocking on doors and pounding the pavement and talk to the properties we are already managing and inform them of what the markets are doing," says Pihl. "In 38 years we've never been out of work. I love Vernonia and I want to help keep Vernonia employed. It's not just about cutting the trees, it's about the community."

Just a quick side note about local mills: Today there are just a handful of mills in operation in the region, including the RSG mill near Mist-Birkenfeld which processes around 90 million board feet of lumber per year, the Hampton Mill in Banks which processes about 85 million board feet, the Stimson Mill in Clatskanie, the Weyerhaeuser Mill in Longview, and Pacific Fiber in North Plains.

Pihl says strict state regulations require loggers to take care of the environment when they are working, although he says he would personally practice care even if those rules weren't in place. "I guarantee you, our company would be protecting the streams, replanting, hand spraying herbicides where necessary. We think about the future. We try as hard as we can to show the public that we really do care."

Pihl says he's seen a lot of changes in mechanization during his time in the industry, from a lot of handwork to mechanical logging, "...stroke boom delimbers, dangle heads, feller bunchers. It does eliminate jobs, but it's also hard to find people to work in the industry now," he says.

There's another technological advance that Pihl says has made a huge difference in how he does his job. "When we talk about technological changes, it's always easy to bring up machinery, but believe it or not one of the biggest changes is the smart phone. We make sort changes from our phone. We can pull up aerial photos on our phone and look at property lines. It gives us the name and address of neighboring property owners. When I first started in the business I would say I spent several hours every day on pay phones. My smart phone saves me so much time and it's so much more convenient."

Recently Mike Pihl Logging purchased a new log truck with an engine that is rated Tier 4 – the most advanced, clean burning, and most efficient industrial diesel engine, which reduces emissions. "We do care about that," says Pihl. "Clean exhaust is important and every new machine we buy will be Tier 4."

As the current president of Timber Unity, which was organized to combat passage of proposed cap-and-trade legislation in the Oregon legislature last year, Pihl's biggest concerns about the continuation of the logging indus-

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try revolve around what he says would have forced the mandatory sale of timber rights, locking them up in long-term, 100 year leases for carbon credits. Pihl remains an outspoken critic of this legislation. "We would probably lose 80% of our timber jobs in Oregon if that cap-and-trade plan had gone through," he says.

Otherwise, he says he doesn't see any major threats to the timber industry. "I think all our forests are well managed by the private people. The majority are responsible landowners, responsible loggers, and there are so many laws in place right now, that it's pretty hard to do something wrong."

"I don't just log for my job," says Pihl. "It's my hobby too. It's my life. Basically, I dream about logs. I love it."

Protecting the Resources

John Krause is one of two Stewardship Foresters working from the Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) Columbia City office, and one of 51 Stewardship Foresters across the state. Krause covers the south half of Columbia County, and works with private landowners and loggers to enforce the Oregon Forest Practices Act.

From multiple conversations I've had, Krause is well liked and respected across the timber industry, and has developed good working relationships. He spent his childhood in Alaska ("That's where I got interested in the outdoors and decided to go into forestry."), graduated with a degree in Forest Management from Washington State University, and has been working for the Oregon Department of Forestry since 1980, the last 34 years doing the same job in Columbia County. He has a long history and extensive knowledge about logging in the region.

The Oregon Forest Practices Act (OFPA) was established in 1971 making Oregon the first state to implement a comprehensive package of standards, legislative rules, and laws that govern how commercial logging can be conducted on Oregon's private forestlands. It covers all aspects of the establishment, management, or harvesting of trees. The OFPA guides pre-operation planning, education for operators, and cooperative efforts between landowners and government, and is intended to help protect forests, water quality, and wildlife habitat. The Oregon Board of Forestry sets the rules for forest practices and interprets the OFPA. State forests in Oregon are overseen by their own foresters who enforce the OFPA. On federal land (BLM, National Forests, Fish and Wildlife managed lands, etc.) the OFPA does not specifically apply, although those agencies have an agreement to meet or exceed the OFPA.

Any landowner or logging operator intending to harvest timber needs to contact the ODF prior to beginning work, and provide a detailed plan on how they intend to meet the requirements of the OFPA.

"One important thing for people to know is that the OFPA is dynamic," says Krause. "It changes as we progress, as science changes, and as public awareness changes."

As the Stewardship Forester, Krause is responsible for enforcing the OFPA. "When someone notifies us of their intent to do any commercial logging, I review their plan and then make sure the Forest Practices Act gets adhered to," explains Krause. "If there's a fish bearing stream I would work with the operator [the logger] and the landowner to make sure that they are aware of the stream resource that is out there and that the stream gets properly protected. In some situations I might ask to meet with the operator to review the site, review the operation, review the resource, and review the written plan, and make sure any questions are answered and everyone is on the same page before they start. Once they start, I may do follow-up inspections to make sure everything looks good and everything is being complied with. I document in writing what I see and what we talk about. I'm the expert on the rules and how they are applied on the ground."

The OFPA has been changed over time. One recent change does not allow landowners to log a parcel of timber larger than 120 acres without leaving a 300 foot stand of trees between cuts. "The OFPA has to be a compromise in some respects, because if you make managing forestland so onerous to these industrial landowners, they're going to sell those properties off and change the use of the land, and it might get developed into housing instead of remaining as forests," says Krause. "Some of these forest properties have beautiful views and would make high dollar home sites which can really change the dynamics and create other issues in an area."

Krause says the goal of the Department of Forestry and their 51 Stewardship Foresters is to have consistent standards and uniformity. "We work really hard to make sure everyone is being treated the same across the state in how we enforce the Practices Act. My job is to work with the loggers and the landowners to help facilitate getting their logs to the mill. The other half of my job is to protect the public's resources – soil, water, and air. We're all working together to achieve the same thing."

After 40 years in the field Krause has seen numerous changes, not just to the rules that oversee logging practices, but to the timber industry itself. One of the biggest changes is the decrease in the rotation age of the timber harvests. "When I started here in 1986 the trees were generally being harvested at 60 years of age," says Krause. "Now they've progressively dropped the rotation age to between 30 and 40 years of age when they go in and clear cut and then start over again on a property. They still do some thinning, but they don't do as much anymore. The non-industrial, family type tree farms may still be waiting to do harvests at 40 to 60 years of age, but on the industrial land is where I've seen them come down in the rotation age."

New technology has created big changes and improved how the timber industry communicates with each other and with the public. Notifications of intent to log can be submitted and reviewed digitally, both in the office and from the field; Krause carries a tablet with him daily when working. "Communication and documentation is a big part of my job," says Krause.

Another technological advance is the Forest Activity Electronic Reporting and Notification System (FERNS), which anyone can subscribe to, free of charge, alerting them to any logging notifications that are submitted in a particular geographic area which the subscriber chooses, including aerial spraying. "FERNS is a powerful tool, especially for the public," says Krause.

Another big change, says Krause, is the amount of automation and mechanization being used in logging today. "If you go back 100 years, they use to cut down trees with big hand saws, 'misery whips' they called them. They'd get up on the trees with their cross cut saws, their axes, and their springboards, and depending on the size, it might take them several hours to fall a tree. Then they came out with these huge chain saws that they had to lug around the woods with them, and that sort of started the process of automation. Today a feller buncher can cut down a tree in seconds – it grabs a hold of it, snips it off at ground level, and lays it down."

The move to mechanization has helped improved safety, says Krause, because a lot of logging is done from the cab of a protected machine. "Logging is one of the most dangerous jobs in the world, so if you can reduce the 'boots on the ground' you reduce the potential for somebody to get hurt."

But he also notes mechanization and efficiency has reduced the manpower needed in logging, and also changed the dynamic of the occupation.

"Logging is a difficult job and it's not for everyone. When you think about loggers in past times, it was a guy out there, walking through the woods with a chainsaw and falling trees. Now it's more mechanized. Now, very rarely would somebody get out of a machine to work. The guys that use to want to log don't want to sit in a machine for eight to 10 hours a day, so it's become harder to attract people to the industry. The people today working in logging are, in some sense, a large equipment operator – there are a lot of similarities between a person grabbing a tree and taking it to the landing, and a person working on an excavator somewhere, like in Portland, where the hours might be better and the employment more steady. It's not as glamorous as it use to be and today it's become a challenge for some of the local outfits to hire and keep good people working for them. And then how do you replace those people when they retire? It's become a huge concern in the industry."

Krause addressed another difficult issue surrounding the timber industry – how much should we regulate privately owned land? "When government comes in and tells people what they can do on their own land, it becomes a delicate balance," he explains, "all under the umbrella of 'resource protection.' Someone might own a piece of land that has a river running through it. They own right up to the water's edge, but they don't own the water – the State of Oregon owns that water. The rules in the OFPA were written to provide resource protection because the state recognized that the balance between private property rights and resource protection is delicate. There's been a push by environmental groups to say the OFPA only sets minimum standards and the landowners are not doing enough to promote other uses and values, like wildlife. They are only doing things like clearcutting, short rotations, and spraying herbicides, just to promote tree growth."

Krause says one way timber companies are attempting to meet higher environmental standards is by participating in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) which promotes elevated standards to protect key values such as protection of biodiversity, at risk species and wildlife habitat; sustainable harvest levels; protection of water quality; and prompt regeneration. More than 360 million acres of the 1.6 billion total acres of forestland in the U.S. and Canada is

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In Memory of...

Brian Fletcher
March 31, 1969 - August 8, 2020

Brian came into this world on March 31, 1969 in Seattle, Washington to Douglas and Carol Fletcher. He passed away August 8, 2020 while doing what he loved, rock hounding on the Nehalem River.

Brian grew up in Lakeside, Oregon spending much of his time with family and friends riding in the sand dunes. He graduated from North Bend High School in 1987 and went on to pursue his college education at Boise State University. Brian's proudest accomplishment was being the father to his two children Taylor Jean and Tanner Jeffrey.

The joy Brian took in being a father was immeasurable. He was the true definition of a father that loved fully and unconditionally. In 2016 his heart grew exponentially when he became a grandfather. He was "Pa" to Everett Rogue, who brought a whole new meaning to life for him. He lit up just talking about Everett and was a kid again when he was with him. He spent as much time with his grandson as he possibly could and was Everett's best friend and adventure partner.

Brother to Kelly Fletcher Silva, and Jeff Fletcher with whom he shared a one of a kind relationship, always filled with love, humor and practical jokes. He married his best friend and soulmate Kimberly "Kimmi" Harrison Fletcher in 2010 and spent 13 wonderful years with her. They shared a love that was like no other. Together they lived life to the fullest, finding joy in every day. Brian helped Kimmi find a new love for nature, exploring, and spontaneity and in return Kimmi showed Brian how to look for the good in every single day and have a new outlook on life and what it had to offer.

He had a true love for life, nature, and family. He taught us all to love the outdoors, to never hold a grudge, to forgive, to find humor and laughter in almost everything, and never take things too seriously. He is so loved and will be missed immensely. Every time we go to the river, dip our toes in the ocean, or have a hazelnut latte, we will think of him.

Brian was preceded in death by his father Doug, his mother Carol; and his eldest brother Kevin Fletcher.

He is survived by wife Kimberly Harrison Fletcher; daughter Taylor Jean Canham, son Tanner Jeffrey Fletcher; grandson Everett Rogue Canham; sister Kelly Fletcher Silva and her husband Desi, brother Jeff Fletcher and his wife Tyna Fletcher; numerous nieces, nephews, cousins; and Lisa Miller his former spouse and mother of their two children.

Bridge Street Bits

By Karen Miller

HI EVERYONE! A beautiful sunny weather greeting to all the *Vernonia's Voice* Readers!

THE SENIOR CENTER BOARD had its monthly meeting the second Friday of this month. All are invited to attend our meetings. The only news at this writing is we are still waiting for last minute logistics to be ironed out, there's always some of those, in order to be cleared to occupy the building, and be able to have our Home Meals prepared and delivered out of the bright, shiny new kitchen.

FOOT CARE will be located at the new building. Call Joyce Jossi at (503) 753 7745.

WE HOPE the community feels good about our new Senior Center… a pleasant sight as one drives into town! It has been a long 12 years to get this completed. Stay tuned for happenings there. The Food Bank is located there as well.

JACK AGEE HAS RETIRED as coordinator of our Home Meals Delivery Program. Thank you Jack for your volunteer time and hard work in your service to local Seniors in need. Please call Theresa, manager of Bargains on Bridge Street at (503) 429 5250 for Senior Meals needs.

SO THAT ABOUT COVERS IT, this time. Stay safe, stay well, and see ya' around town…

Vernonia Senior Center
939 Bridge Street • (503) 429-3912

The Timber Industry Today

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certified to the SFI Forest Management Standard. The SFI certification identifies for consumers which wood products meet these standards. Krause says lands managed by Weyerhaeuser, Hancock, and Rayonier in Oregon all meet these standards and are certified by SFI.

Krause says his biggest concern about logging in Oregon today is the amount of raw material that is being shipped overseas. "If we could take more of our raw product and run it through a mill, and turn it into dimensional lumber before you put it on a ship, that would help immensely with job creation here."

He adds that he also thinks public input and involvement is important to safeguarding Oregon's forestlands particularly with regard to aerial spraying. "I've never been a strong advocate of aerial spraying. Industrial property owners look at their land and trees as a crop, where there are so many other uses for that land. When they clearcut, they spray in order to kill any other vegetation which could compete for soil, light, and water when they replant their trees, which makes those trees grow faster. And that spraying likely only happens once every 30 or 40 years, but I don't think there's a lot of thought given to how that effects the rest of the forest. A forest is unique because there are so many other things that are using that piece of property – birds, mammals, insects, and other organisms. When you start managing it only for the intensive growing of trees, you're disrupting those other things. So, I would like to see a more judicious use of aerial application of herbicides. I think the culture needs to be changed so we start to take a strong look at each site and whether spraying is absolutely necessary before you make that decision to do aerial application."

Krause says he sees some real differences in how smaller property owners manage their timberlands compared to the large, industrial properties. As an example, he points to a 300 acre, family owned property in Scappoose that has trees growing on it that are about 120 years old. "The trees are huge!," says Krause. "The property has been in the family for two generations and they're just not interested in cutting everything down and making money. It's kind of nice to see that."

The Oregon-American mill closed in 1957 and left hundreds of people without jobs because O-A did not practice sustainable logging, and cut through all the trees in the region. I asked Krause if the timber industry is currently practicing sustainable logging – are we in danger of cutting all our timber? Are the large corporations who own the majority of timberland in Columbia County and in Oregon only interested in profits? Do they consider the interests of their neighbors where they own land and the communities who depend on them for jobs?

Krause prefaced his answer by saying he probably isn't the best person to answer those questions completely. "We see a fair amount of changes in landownership, with big companies buying properties as investments, so we do get some disconnect. But we do have logging companies here, doing the work on the land, that have been operating for decades – companies like Gwin and Sons. C&C Logging was started by Frank Chandler here in Vernonia around 1960. We have landownership changes, but you also have the loggers who kind of remain the same. And they have a real connection to the land. I don't see an issue with sustainability out here. The OFPA has been modified or changed over time to add protections, through limited sizes of clearcuts, leaving wildlife trees for habitat, and protecting water quality. I think we'll always have forestland and we'll always have trees. It is a business for these industrial landowners to grow trees as quickly as they can and harvest them to make profits for their shareholders. The productivity of the land is so good here – it's so easy to grow trees here, and in Columbia County we have relatively gentle ground, so it's easy to harvest them."

Krause had these final thoughts about the loggers he works with in Columbia County. "I think most of the loggers are pretty conscientious when they're out there in the woods. They don't want to make a mess, they don't want to cause a fire, they have spill kits. At the end of the day, they want to feel good about what they're doing. But they also see it as a way of making a living."

Next issue: Are large corporate landowners good for logging and our economy? Are current logging regulations doing enough to protect our natural resources and the environment? What is the impact of plantation-style (single species) timberlands?