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VERNONIA'S voice
reflecting the spirit of our community

free

Vernonia Celebrates Grand Opening of New Senior Center

Vernonia senior citizens were finally able to show off their brand new, beautiful Senior Center facility at a ribbon cutting ceremony on Saturday, September 12. Vernonia Cares, which shares the other side of the facility, also officially celebrated the grand opening of their new food pantry at the same event, although they have been operating from the building for several weeks.

Vernonia Senior Board President Ilene Grady cutting the ribbon at the Grand Opening.

The project, which has been in the planning stages for decades, is now finally a reality, although, unfortunately, use will be limited while COVID restrictions remain in place.

Vernonia Mayor Rick Hobart opened the big event with a few words, noting that a ground breaking ceremony took place at the same spot almost exactly one year ago. Senior Citizen Board President Ilene Grady and Vernonia Cares Board President Tina Dean took part in a ribbon cutting

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Vernonia Honors 9/11

The Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District and Vernonia Volunteer Ambulance Association held their annual 9/11 March to honor the fallen heroes. Vernonia First Responders have held this ceremony every year since 2002.

The Timber Industry of Today Part 3: Alternative Timber Management

By Scott Laird

In this multi-part series we've been exploring the timber industry and its impact on Oregon's economy and forest ecosystems. In Part 3 we look at how the timber industry is regulated in Oregon and some alternatives to the industrial business model most of us are familiar with.

To say the timber industry runs in Peter Hayes's veins would be an understatement. Hayes is the fifth, direct generation of his family to work the forests, and the Hayes's children are the sixth. He and wife Pam currently manage Hyla Woods, which sustainably owns and cares for 1,000 acres of forestland in Northwest Oregon.

Many other members of the Hayes family lineage have also owned or worked in the timber industry, several who were closely linked with timberland giant Weyerhaeuser and the conquest of the Pacific Northwest's forests.

But in the last several generations, the Hayes family has drifted away from the business model Weyerhaeuser pioneered.

Today Hyla Woods is a template for alternative forest management practices and a leader in the discussion about how we can better care for our forest ecosystems.

"Our thought is that the forests have been good to us, why not try to return the favor," says Hayes. "The opportunity we have is to try and make things better. We see ourselves as problem solvers and one of the problems we're trying to address is how to create more opportunity and vitality for rural people."

Hayes's great-great grandfather, Orrin Ingram, got involved in the timber industry as a young man in the Adirondack Mountains in New York in the early days of western timber expansion. He worked his way west along the Great Lakes, through the upper Mississippi region, and was an early competitor of Frederick Weyerhaeuser, before joining him as an investor and shareholder in the company that would change the face of the timber industry. Ingram also invested money in his own venture – timberland and a sawmill in Willapa Bay in southwest Washington.

Ingram's grandson, Edmund Hayes, is Peter's grandfather, and was also involved in the timber industry, learning about timber cruising, logging, sawmill operations, and sales as a young Weyerhaeuser Company trainee, before becoming an independent operator in the late 1920s. In 1938 Edmund was elected to the Weyerhaeuser Board of Directors and in 1951 became a Vice President. As part of the Weyerhaeuser Company, Edmund was at the table when major new strategies in how timber would be harvested were being hatched, from the cut-and-run model that had seen the industry move all the way across the continent, to the new "tree farm" model that took shape, with replanting and single species "crop plantations" leading the way. Edmund even privately entered the market with a partner by purchasing 5,000 acres of cutover timberland near Olney and established the Elk Mountain Tree Farm. "Through careful stewardship, they developed and improved the land, and demonstrated, to themselves and others, that staying put could be a viable business model," writes Peter Hayes in a family history he drafted.

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inside

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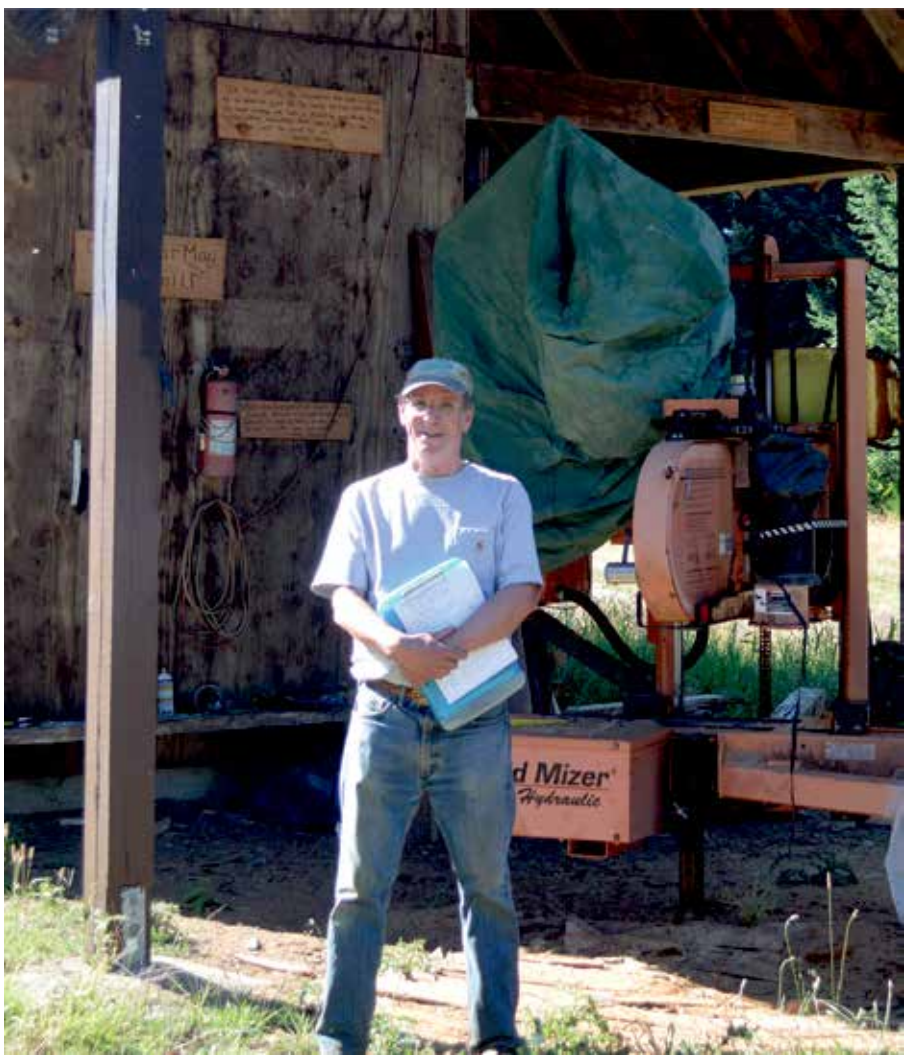
The view of Bridge Street from Vernonia's Cory Hill on Monday evening, September 14 after a week of wildfires in Oregon. The air quality remained poor in many parts of the state, but cooler temperatures and a small amount of rain brought some relief. Reports were calling for the smoke to dissipate toward the end of the week.

The Timber Industry of Today
Part 3: Alternative Timber Management *continued from front page*

Peter's father Ned initially started in the timber industry working in the woods as a logger and in sawmills in the northwest, and even spent some time working in a Weyerhaeuser logging camp, before buying a grinding and machine works in Portland in the 1960s. Upon his retirement he sold the business and in 1986 purchased 160 acres of timberland in the Nehalem Valley near Timber, and then expanded to purchase what became the Mt. Richmond Forest property near Gaston and the 100 acre Manning Forest which make up the current Hyla Woods holdings.

This is where the Hayes family and the Weyerhaeuser business model finally diverged. After generations of being intertwined with the timber giant and focused on profit and growth, Ned saw that forests could be managed for more than just their market value.

"In the world of forestry there's a habit of not being humble," says Peter Hayes. "A lot of foresters will say, 'The problem is the public just doesn't trust us. We have it all figured out – they just need to listen to us!' We're just the opposite [at Hyla Woods]. Our attitude is we should approach everything with humility, respect, reverence, good humor, and always questioning whether what we're doing is the right thing."



Peter Hayes of Hyla Woods at the sawmill on the Mt. Richmond Forest property

An Alternative Model

I meet Peter Hayes at the gate that leads into the 750 acre Mt. Richmond Forest owned by Hyla Woods on a sunny afternoon in late August, after a winding drive on dirt roads that take me further into the hills outside Gaston. After passing several "tree farms" with trees planted in rows, it's obvious Mt. Richmond is a different kind of working forest. The undergrowth is lush, and the trees are a mix of fir, maple, ash, alder, cedar, and even some oak, all of varying ages and sizes.

Hayes grew up in Portland and attended the University of Oregon where he developed an interest in people's relationship to nature. He spent the next 25+ years as an educator, mostly in the Puget Sound area, teaching about issues relating to land use and people's connection to nature. He and wife Pam took over Hyla Woods in 2006, and Peter has worked full-time in the forest since 2007. "The thing with family forestry is that it doesn't create enough revenue to support more than one generation at a time, especially if your focus is to restore land," says Hayes.

Hyla Woods directly employs just two people, Peter and Pam. Their son Ben is a professional forester who is finding his way into the business, and daughter Molly is a wildlife biologist. There's a small sawmill on site, which Hayes operates, and a dry kiln which uses solar heat to dry their milled lumber. They grow 12 different species of trees which they can turn into commercial logs. The company depends on a range of skilled contractors for many jobs, including logging, road building, and tree planting, and creates jobs through the products they produce and sell – decking and lumber to contractors, hardwood flooring, and wood for furniture. Ben has spent time this summer developing a project which manufactures post and beam cabin kits, that takes the process from a tree to an installed, finished product (www.hylahuts.com). "I think we're successful in one of our goals which is to provide meaningful, well paid work to people," says Hayes. "A concern we have is that with automation across the timber industry, there is more and more being cut with less jobs. We feel an important thing we do is use a less mechanized and more human, hands-on approach. We've tried to design our business, not to get rid of workers, but to maintain meaningful work. What keeps this interesting is you're not just doing a job, but you can keep shaping it to try and have integrity between what you believe and what you do."

"People say they own the land, but in some ways it owns us, because we can't own the wildlife, we can't own the water, we can't own the air. Which means we have rights here, but we also have responsibilities. A lot of the profit that comes from the timber industry is at the expense of things that we all share in common being degraded."

One of the goals at Hyla Woods is to develop systems of forestry that will work as well in the long run as they do in the short run, by creating new models of forestry that are both good for the land and good for people, while also wrestling with the societal question of, "What is a forest for?"

Hayes thinks a forest can have many uses. "People want many more things from forests than just wood. They want water. They want habitat. They want a place to recreate. They want to store carbon."

While Hyla Woods is an experiment in developing ways to practice sustainable forestry, most forest owners need to make some money from their property. Is the Hyla Woods model also economically sustainable?

"Operating models similar to ours can be, and there are lots of people doing it on a much larger scale," replies Hayes. "A forest can provide many things, including timber, but not only timber. The thing that is fundamentally unstable about that is, why would a private landowner emphasize all those other values if the system only pays them for one of them? The fact that the timber industry has gone to this plantation mentality with trees as a crop is a function of an economic system that says we value things but we don't price it. We need to have a system that has multiple values and multiple revenue streams so you can incentivize the landowner."

Hayes is an admirer of Aldo Leopold, an early student in the newly created field of forestry in the early 1900s, whose ethics helped influence the environmental movement. Leopold promoted the idea that landowners have two responsibilities – their personal investment in the land they own, but also to the pubic trust. He also questioned the idea of land as a commodity belonging to someone, but instead promoted it as a community to which we belong. "People say they own the land, but in some ways it owns us," says Hayes," because we can't own the wildlife, we

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can't own the water, we can't own the air. Which means we have rights here, but we also have responsibilities. A lot of the profit that comes from the timber industry is at the expense of things that we all share in common being degraded. Really, it wasn't theirs to take and one of the jobs of government is to make sure the things we share in common are maintained. And our government is failing to do that. And now we're living with impoverished systems that create fewer and fewer opportunities."

Who Regulates the Timber Industry in Oregon

The Oregon Board of Forestry is a seven-person board, responsible for establishing forest policy for timber harvests, environmental regulations, and firefighting practices, along with setting management priorities on state forest lands. Their stated mission is to implement "policies and programs that promote environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable management of Oregon's 28,000,000 acres of public and private forests." They work with both private timberland owners and all public landowners (county, state, and federal) to interpret the Oregon Forest Practices Act, a set of laws established by the Oregon Legislature which sets standards for all commercial activities on Oregon's forestlands. They appoint the State Forester and oversee the Oregon Department of Forestry. Their members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Appointees generally serve two, four-year terms before being replaced.

The membership of the Oregon Board of Forestry, and whether their appointment is based on any particular bias, is a subject of interest. The current Board is made up of the following individuals, noting some of their qualifications:

• Chair Tom Imeson, 2nd term – Vice President of public affairs at NW Natural; experience in state and federal government; served on the Land Conservation and Development Commission, and the Board of Higher Education.

• Nils Christoffersen, 2nd term – current Executive Director of the non-profit Wallowa Resources; has worked on African conservation issues; served on and chaired the Governor's Eastside Forest Advisory Panel, and the National Commission on Science for Sustainable Forestry.

• Cindy Deacon Williams, 2nd term – a consulting fisheries biologist, with 30 years of service in state and federal government and in the non-profit world; worked for USDA Forest Service on fishery issues; served as Director of Aquatic Science and Conservation Education Programs.

• Mike Rose, 2nd term – has represented forest industry workers for 36 years; a logger with International Paper Company's Gardiner facility, has worked in the forest products industry for 20 years.

• Joe Justice, 1st term – Region Manager of Hancock Forest Management; President of the East Oregon Forest Protection Association, and served on the Eastern Oregon Regional Forest Practices Committee; has worked as a Regeneration Forester, Silviculturist, in logging administration, and log marketing and management.

• Jim Kelly, 1st term – owns and manages a ranch in Grant County; served on boards of 1,000 Friends of Oregon, the Portland Housing Authority, and Business for Social Responsibility; co-founder of the Oregon Business Association.

• Brenda McComb, 1st term – Professor Emerita in the Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society at OSU; served as a Chief of the Watershed Ecology Branch in Corvallis for the U.S. EPA; advises graduate students working on forest habitat selection studies, teaches graduate and professional education courses, and is a consultant on forest management issues.

Three new members are expected to be appointed this year.

A series of investigative articles in early 2019 by the Oregonian's Rob Davis, titled "Polluted By Money" examined the influence of political contributions by big industry to Oregon legislators. "Oregon's failure to regulate campaign cash has made it one of the biggest money states in American politics," wrote Davis. "The flood of money created an easy regulatory climate where industry gets what it wants, again and again." Davis went on to state "Companies and industry groups contributed $43 million to winning candidates in elections from 2008 to 2016, nearly half the money legislators raised."

"If the timber industry doesn't want to pay more in taxes, then they should be required to do more active restoration work on their dollar with their manpower."

And one of those biggest industries is timber. According to the article, the timber industry donated more than twice as much money to Oregon state legislator's campaigns than they did in any other state.

Peter Hayes served on the Board of Forestry for a single four-year term, from 2008 to 2011 and was not asked to serve again. Hayes says one way to judge whether timber laws and protections are adequate is to measure whether the things we share in common are thriving. "If we're losing them, then it would argue that our laws are inadequate." Hayes said several studies have proven water quality is not meeting the standards of the Clean Water Act in many rivers and streams. He said Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has found that 38 species that are forest dependent in the North Coast area are locally extinct, or federally listed as endangered or threatened. He said when he was on the Board of Forestry the Department of Forestry was using protocols that were indicators of sustainable forestry – the indicator that looked at forest dependent plants and animals found the conditions were poor, the trend was declining, and the data was accurate.

"I made a fuss over that and said we can't ignore it," says Hayes. "If we've set up these indicators to guide our decisions then we should pay attention to them." Instead, the Department of Forestry decided to get rid of the indicator system. "I had to choose between doing what I thought was right versus getting along, and I chose the former. And for that I was branded 'an enemy of the timber industry' and was not reappointed." Hayes says the governor's wish to reappoint him and Cal Mukumoto to second terms was blocked by senators unwilling to confirm the appointment.

Standing up to big timber has always been political suicide for Oregon legislators, says Hayes. "We have some political icons like Tom McCall who were able to do big things in this state, but if you look really closely they were careful never to cross big timber." He points to current Governor Kate Brown's choice to stand up and not sell the Elliot State Forest, near Coos Bay, in 2017. "I would argue that's the first time we've ever had a governor who did something big timber was upset about," says Hayes. "Historically we've ended up with a Board of Forestry that has been dominated and controlled by interests that are looking out for the larger landowners."

The influence of timber money and lack of action by Oregon's legislators has in turn impacted the vigor of the Oregon Forest Practices Act, and the results are seen directly in the decline of wildlife populations, like Coho salmon. When introduced in 1971, Oregon was the first state to implement a set of comprehensive laws to govern timber harvest practices, but since then Oregon's logging rules have fallen behind other western states. In response, environmental groups and scientists have consistently argued for stronger protections for Oregon's fish and wildlife, air and water quality, and soil health.

The Ecological Health of the Nehalem River Valley

Maggie Peyton, the Executive Director of the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC), based in Vernonia, has been assessing the health of the Nehalem watershed and tracking the impacts of historical and current land use practices on local water quality and salmon production for almost 30 years.

Through years of research projects that monitor summer stream temperatures and winter water turbidity (clarity clouded by soil particles), stream flow gauging, and documentation of juvenile Coho presence, the UNWC has shown that summer temperatures in the Nehalem River are routinely high and winter flows are sediment laden and lethal for fish. It is evident that the upper Nehalem watershed temperate rainforest is intensely logged on short rotations, resulting in redundant clearcuts at the sub-basin scale. This reduces the over-all thickness and density of the forest canopy which then impacts stream flow through the increased frequency of extreme high flow and low flow events due to the reduced buffering capacity of the forest sponge to capture, store, and release water. This pattern is exacerbated by seasonal climate fluctuations.

"The timber industry is profiting billions of dollars each year while influencing politics to keep practices status quo," says Peyton.

Under Peyton's leadership, the UNWC, using a mix of state, federal, and private funding sources, has worked on stream restoration projects – tree plantings along stream banks to

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provide shade to help cool waterways, placing trees into streams to create complex log jams for habitat, culvert replacements to allow better fish passage and increase available habitat, and construction of Beaver Dam Analogues to help reestablish beaver colonies where they historically existed.

"I'm not going to say the Oregon Forest Practices Act is a bad thing, because it's better than nothing, and there is a lot of benefit from it," says Peyton. "But getting it where it is today, as far as the protections it offers, has been a long, drawn out battle of science versus politics."

The UNWC uses Coho salmon as an indicator species, and tracks their numbers to show the impacts of environmental regulations as well as the efficacy of their restoration projects. "What's good for the Coho is good for everything else," says Peyton. But the results over-all are not positive. Most sources agree that salmon are already extinct in about 40% of their historic ranges, and currently 19 species are either endangered or threatened and their numbers continue to decline.

Placing large woody debris into streams has been a major component of the UNWC's work. They work with local property owners, including large corporate landowners, to find suitable locations for a project, and then purchase logs, often from the same landowner. Usually they are lower quality trees with defects that the timber industry would normally cull ("The gnarlier the tree, the better for us," says Peyton), sometimes at a reduced price and sometimes donated. They then hire local contractors to move and place the logs into the streams. New analysis by the UNWC is pointing to an issue that's been termed "Steep Slope Delivery Systems" which looks at how the reduced amount of woody debris that would naturally find its way downhill into streams and create important habitat for juvenile and other fish has been diminished because of logging. "If the headwaters of streams and the steep slopes are clearcut, when that slope naturally fails, it's not going to deliver large wood into the stream system," explains Peyton. "It's expensive for us to do that work. And it's getting harder and harder for us to find timber that is large enough and that makes logistical sense to get it to our restoration sites."

These restoration projects are funded, at least in part, by tax dollars – in other words, the timber industry is creating a problem while making a profit, including selling the trees to be placed into streams, and then the public is paying to fix the problem after they're done.

Peyton appreciates that timber companies do some of their own restoration work and have always been good partners with the watershed council. However it's not enough to offset accumulated historical habitat losses overlaid with climate change and decline in biodiversity. "If the timber industry doesn't want to pay more in taxes, then they should be required to do more active restoration work on their dollar with their manpower," she says. She notes that Weyerhaeuser currently does not allow installation of the Beaver Dam Analogues on their properties, projects proven to help restore watershed health and salmon productivity. "There's just so much more work that we could be doing together."

Peyton says our streams and rivers need better protections, starting at the headwaters and all the way to the coast, with expanded buffers around streams, reduced clearcuts at the sub-basin scale, and older forest structure allowed to develop (75 year rotations) over time while converting to a multi-age logging strategy (selective logging). "I know what I want is realistic and productive," says Peyton. "I've accepted that we can't go back to the old growth forest regime. We are blessed to live, work, and recreate in the most productive forestland in the world, and there must be a scenario in which we can manage these forests so they're resilient to climate change and fire, promote biodiversity, deliver clean, clear water, provide ample habitat for fish and wildlife and recreation for people, and still remain wildly productive for timber and jobs and support our beloved communities. The Oregon Department of Forestry is attempting to manage our public forests for the greatest permanent value, but currently prioritizes timber production over other priorities because of its dollar value. We have not assigned a dollar value to our forests' other uses, so they naturally have taken a back seat to timber production."

An Upper Nehalem Watershed Council stream restoration project places large woody debris to create fish habitat.

"We've lived with systems that are basically extractive and exploitative. People have made money, but it's been at the expense of both the ecology and the human communities. What we need are regenerative systems. We need to take care of what we have. That's a part of our heritage – it's not some wacko, socialist ideal. It's fundamental to who we are as Oregonians."

Reimagining Logging in Oregon

Back at the Mt. Richmond Forest, Peter Hayes addresses the same issue. "Part of government's job should be to answer that question, 'What is a forest for?' Oregonians inevitably are going to struggle with these forest issues and if we have functioning systems, the struggle should be healthy and should happen within our government. But when we have governmental systems that are not representative of Oregonians, it's not like the struggle is going to go away. The struggle is going to result in tree sits and law suits if the government isn't functional enough to do this work."

The current practice of planting, growing, and harvesting a single species of trees is the current model which the market rewards by providing a nice profit on large industrial timberlands. "The downside is, forests have always been on the receiving end of natural stresses and strains – dry and wet periods, insects, fire, temperatures," says Hayes. "You should want a forest that can be resilient to those stresses, and the system that is least resilient is when you have all your eggs in one basket. You're just one bug or disease away from losing everything. We think the prudent thing is to grow a forest which has that adaptive capacity to deal with changes."

To create that resilient forest Hyla Woods has formed a comprehensive set of goals and initiatives.

They are producing value-added products, like the cabins son Ben is developing. "Part of the value in the product becomes the wood and the story behind it where it comes from," says Hayes. "There are some nice examples of that happening, but I think we can do much more with it."

With that in mind, 15 years ago they helped create a non-profit called the "Build Local Alliance" which connects good, locally and sustainably grown wood with local projects. It helps growers, loggers, sawmillers, designers, and builders to network and create supply chains, with about 500 members in Northwest Oregon and Southwest Washington. "Vernonia has no reason not to be thriving," says Hayes. "There could be many wood-based businesses, but there are too few."

One of the trees Hyla Woods features is oak, which is an important part of the Willamette Valley ecosystem, yet less than 5% of the original oak remains.

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Schools Update: Comprehensive Distance Learning

By Superintendent Aaron Miller

Students in the Vernonia School District (VSD) will officially start their "Comprehensive Distance Learning" program for remote, online learning this Monday, September 21. Teachers and staff members have been working hard to put together online materials that will be engaging, accessible, and on target for meeting subject area learning standards.

Teachers have been contacting students and families to discuss the online formats being used to deliver instruction, the expectations of students and parents during at-home learning, as well as what needs students and families have to make all of these new processes work for them. In addition, teachers have been attending trainings to become familiar and proficient with these programs in order to deliver the most effective online instruction possible.

All students will be provided a district Chromebook for their use at home, if it is needed. Internet connectivity will also be provided if this is a need of the family. The VSD is working hard to remove all technological barriers so that all of their students have equal access to these online learning experiences.

Students will be "attending" online classes each Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and will have all day Wednesday designated for completing class and homework.

If for some reason your student or family has an educational, social, or emotional need to make distance learning work for you, please contact the school (503-429-1333) so we can work to determine the best course of action to address the issue.

Throughout the spring and summer, the VSD has been able to provide a free breakfast and lunch for ALL children ages 0-18 every Monday-Friday. This service will remain available at the Vernonia Schools front doors between 11:00 am and Noon every Monday-Thursday between now and the end of December. In addition, the school will resume bus delivery of meals soon. If you have need for school age meals to be delivered, contact the school with your information so we can add you to the list.

It is the VSD's goal to provide all its students with an effective, well-rounded education whether we are on campus or online. If you have any questions regarding distance learning in the VSD, please contact the schools at (503) 429-1333, or the Superintendent at (503) 429-5891.

School Board Report

At the September 10, 2020 School Board Meeting:

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board there will be limited in-person meetings with students for assessments while the District is working under Distance Learning requirements..

Miller told the Board the Chromebooks the District ordered were held up in U.S. Customs but the District was able to borrow enough for all students from the Battleground Washington School District.

Miller said the new art room addition is almost complete and new playground equipment is scheduled to be delivered for Mist and VES soon.

Miller said the District served 7,300 meals in August.

Miller said Student Investment Account funding was reduced by 66% to $171,000.

Board Reviews Bus Service Contract Adjustment – Superintendent Aaron Miller presented the Board with a draft of an MOU between the District and Curl's Bus Service who provides transportation services. This year the District will be utilizing Curl's Bus Service to deliver meals to students. Transportation for students to and from school will not resume until the District exits Distance Learning. Curl's had had to invest in new vehicles to make deliveries and purchase cleaning supplies for COVID requirements. The MOU revises the current service contract, which reduces daily costs for the District and extends the length of the contract for an additional year. These changes allows the District to realize a savings from services not utilized, but will also help keep Curl's business solvent. The final contract will be brought back for approval at the next meeting.

Board Approves New Hire – The Board approved the hire of Jamie Hamsa as Social and Emotional Learning Director. Hamsa worked at the VSD .33 time last year. This year she will work .4 FTE and will be shared with the Clatskanie School District.

Board Approves MOU with Classified Employees – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board the Vernonia Employees Association, the union which represents the classified employees, has asked to open bargaining of their contract due to changing work conditions necessitated by COVID related impacts. The change to the contract provides compensation for childcare.

Vernonia School Board Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 8, 6:00 pm
Please check the District's website for updates/changes
www.vernonia.k12.or.us

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Not only have they kept and enhanced oak trees but they've also converted purchased farmland to re-establish an oak forest in partnership with Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District and others.

They also work hard to encourage the growth of cedar because of its high value, both ecologically and financially.

Storing carbon is another function of a healthy native forest. Hayes says by growing trees longer and not cutting at 40 year rotations or less, which is the current average, trees will store above average amounts of carbon; the baseline of carbon per acre is 120 tons, while Hyla Woods averages 180 tons and has some areas storing over 200 tons. Hyla Woods also implements buffers around streams that are wider than those required by law, and those areas generally store more carbon.

Hyla Woods has a goal of being fossil fuel free, and runs machinery on non-fossil fuel diesel, along with their solar heat dry kiln.

They also utilize volunteers to observe and count birds on their property as a way to monitor the health of the forest, birds being a sentinel species, "a canary in a coal mine" so to speak, that act as an advance warning sign that helps detect risks to humans.

In some areas they practice what is called "variable retention harvests" where they take 40% of the trees and leave 60%, which creates both large openings, but also leaves shade. It also helps protect the soil quality.

In some areas trees are replanted after harvest, but because they don't clearcut, they're able to allow the remaining trees to naturally reseed in most areas.

Like organically farmed products receive certification of their practices, so do timber products have certifications to show they practice sustainable forestry. In the 1990s, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was created and held timber growers to a set of standards. Hyla Woods was one of the first forests to be certified in the Northwest in 1996. "It was a market incentive to do better than the status quo or the minimum of the law. The industry just laughed at it at the time, and said consumers wouldn't care," says Hayes. And then it began to gain traction, and the rest of the timber industry wanted to take part. But instead of following the FSC guidelines, the industry created their own competing standards called the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), which works on the assumption that timber growers should be rewarded for doing relatively little in terms of on-the-ground management practices beyond what is required by law. "It ended up confusing consumers," concludes Hayes.

Hayes readily admits Hyla Woods is an experiment of sorts in developing new models of forestry, at least in the way they try new things to find what works best in various conditions and document their results. "We have to hold ourselves accountable," says Hayes. "Intentions are nice, actions are good, but what really counts are outcomes."

What Hayes sees is a need for a cultural shift in how we interact with and use our forests.

"There's work to be done," says Hayes. "We've lived with systems that are basically extractive and exploitative. People have made money, but it's been at the expense of both the ecology and the human communities. What we need are regenerative systems. We need to take care of what we have. That's a part of our heritage – it's not some wacko, socialist ideal. It's fundamental to who we are as Oregonians."

Hayes closed our visit to Hyla Woods with an interesting insight. He said many things we own, like a chainsaw or a truck, will function well, and for a long time, if they are maintained. But eventually they will become less functional and reliable. The same applies to a person or a tree – we're all in a similar downward cycle. Over time, we all come and go, and it's easy to think that's just the way the world is. But a forest ecosystem is different. "There are parts of a forest, that if you create the right conditions they go the other way – they become more functional, more valuable, and more resilient over time. They become upcycle, but they're made up of parts that are downcycle. The same concept applies if you look at a community like Vernonia. The postmaster might change, and the mayor, but if you create the right conditions you can attract good 'replacement parts.' And there's no reason it can't become more resilient over time. We're called on to create regenerative human communities and forests that reliably sustain one another; where better than right here?"

Next issue: the state of Oregon's state forests; small family forests; how the timber industry controls the narrative.