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## Groups share accounts of fight against timber industry power Rockaway Beach gathering draws crowd for second year

By Scott Gilbert

**H**OPE was in the air Sept. 17 at the second annual town hall event presented by Rockaway Beach Citizens for Watershed Protection, a group that got its start over something very different in the air.

Aerial pesticide spraying on private timberland that is the source of drinking water for Rockaway Beach drove the creation of the group. The group's influence and grasp of forestry issues have both expanded as it has formed alliances with others seeking clean air, clean water and environmental justice, aiming to change Oregon's forestry law that favors the powerful timber industry.

"Forestry, Pesticides and North Coast Communities" was the name of the program at St. Mary by the Sea Catholic Church, featuring the premiere of "Behind the Emerald Curtain" by documentary filmmaker Shane Anderson.

The half-hour film pulls away the "Emerald Curtain" of Oregon's unjustified reputation for environmental purity, with a deft examination of clear-cutting, pesticide spraying, steep-slope logging, stream degradation, worsening deforestation and other timber issues. "As a filmmaker, I look for stories that affect me," said Anderson, "and all the stories I came across in Oregon affected me deeply."

The film was done in conjunction with Portland-based Pacific Rivers Council, which works to protect and restore rivers and watersheds. Greg Haller, the group's conservation coordinator, talked about the goal of reforming Oregon's forestry law, which is skimpy on oversight and restrictions. Pacific Rivers, which is working with other groups sharing similar goals, is currently arranging screenings of the powerhouse "Behind the Emerald Curtain" around the state.

"We need to really highlight these problems and really do that through storytelling," Haller said. "Essentially, what we're trying to do is reform where people can log and how they log."

Deke Gunderson, an environmental toxicologist who teaches in the environmental studies program at Pacific University in Forest Grove, cheered on the Rockaway Beach group and the area residents who filled the fellowship hall at St. Mary.

"You're doing the right thing," he said, comparing the group to the one led by Love Canal activist Lois Gibbs, who spoke at Pacific University last year. "You have to make a stink about things. You have to create bad publicity for the private industry that's creating some of these problems."

He gave a brief rundown on how mixtures of pesticides and chemi-



**THE JETTY CREEK WATERSHED** — now 82 percent logged — is the source of drinking water for Rockaway Beach and is the site of logging practices that led to the formation of Rockaway Beach Citizens for Watershed Protection.



**LANDSLIDE** Landslides like this one are among the dangers tied to current Oregon forestry practices, as explored in the film "Behind the Emerald Curtain."



**FORLORN WATERFALL** Water cascades down a barren hillside, picking up sediment and other contaminants as it passes through an Oregon clear-cut in a scene from "Behind the Emerald Curtain."

Photos courtesy of Shane Anderson/Pacific Rivers/Lighthawk



icals, which are sprayed on clear-cuts to wipe out species that compete with timber-company seedlings, can combine to create highly carcinogenic dioxin and other unpredictable formulations. "There's always more to that mix than what they're talking about," he said.

Chandra LeGue, western field coordinator for Portland-based Oregon Wild, talked about her group's longtime focus on protecting and restoring federal lands, which have much stronger environmental rules than their private counterparts. She noted, however, that the group is establishing ties to others who are fighting the private-land problems that gave rise to the Rockaway Beach group.

"We're going to be hiring a grassroots organizer," she said, who will "work with some of the communities here on the north coast."

Wheeler city manager Geoff Wullschlager described the frustration of trying to get spray information from a timber company and state officials. He used an online bulletin board to update his city's residents, who turned up the heat on the timber company.

"Your voice matters," said Wullschlager, adding that the message to take from the town hall was: "When you do get together — regardless of county divide or city lines — when you get together as a group, they do hear you."

Lisa Arkin, executive director of the Eugene-based environmental justice grassroots group Beyond Toxics, described recent successes in which the organization has played a role. Many of them were in Oregon House Bill 3549, the "baby buffer bill" that became law and re-established a 60-foot buffer in which pesticides can't be sprayed around homes and schools.

The law also established a 24-hour pesticide complaint hotline with a 24-hour response deadline, meaning people exposed to pesticides and citing health problems can now get the spray records promptly. Spray notifications that currently cost money will be put online in a free, searchable format, and applicator training was made more stringent.

A big success, she said, was simply getting a health-based policy added to Oregon forestry law. "We got the Legislature talking about health in the Forest Practices Act," she said.

Screenings of "Behind the Emerald Curtain" and its eventual release online will be announced at [pacificrivers.org](http://pacificrivers.org). Rockaway Beach Citizens for Watershed Protection is online at [facebook.com/rockawaybeachcitizens](http://facebook.com/rockawaybeachcitizens) and can be reached at [rockawaycitizen.water@gmail.com](mailto:rockawaycitizen.water@gmail.com) or 503-355-2516.