

Hello and Welcome to north coast communities for watershed protections first Astoria event. My name is Anna Kaufman, and I am currently working as NCCWP's Astoria Coordinator. I'm here with NCCWP's president, Nancy Webster, and many other volunteers and partner organizations who have worked so hard to help put on this event. I am thrilled to be here tonight and am grateful to you all for joining us here and making this kickoff possible.

To begin, I'd like to start off by acknowledging that we are currently residing on the unceded lands of the Clatsop, Chinook, Nehalem, Tillamook, Grand ronde and Siletz tribes, who have inhabited this area since time immemorial. Many other tribes also came through this territory to trade, have ceremony, and familial relations with the tribes of this homeland. How we manage the land today generally disregards the First Nations peoples who have resided here for millennia. Let's take a moment to acknowledge this fact.

I am now going to tell you a story. You may know this one.

THERE WAS ONCE a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields. In autumn, oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of color that flamed and flickered across a backdrop of pines. Then foxes barked in the hills and deer silently crossed the fields, half hidden in the mists of the fall mornings.

Along the roads, laurel, viburnum and alder, great ferns and wildflowers delighted the traveler's eye through much of the year. Even in winter the roadsides were places of beauty, where countless birds came to feed on the berries and on the seed heads of the dried weeds rising above the snow. The countryside was, in fact, famous for the abundance and variety of its bird life, and when the flood of migrants was pouring through in spring and fall people traveled from great distances to observe them.

Others came to fish the streams, which flowed clear and cold out of the hills and contained shady pools where trout lay. So it had been from the days many years ago when the first settlers raised their houses, sank their wells, and built their barns.

Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change. Some evil spell had settled on the community: mysterious maladies swept the flocks of chickens; the cattle and sheep sickened and died. Everywhere was a shadow of death. The farmers spoke of much illness among their families. In the town the doctors had become more and more puzzled by

new kinds of sickness appearing among their patients. There had been several sudden and unexplained deaths, not only among adults but even among children, who would be stricken suddenly while at play and die within a few hours.

There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example— where had they gone? Many people spoke of them, puzzled and disturbed. The feeding stations in the backyards were deserted. The few birds seen anywhere were moribund; they trembled violently and could not fly. It was a spring without voices. On the mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices, there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh.

On the farms the hens brooded, but no chicks hatched. The farmers complained that they were unable to raise any pigs— the litters were small and the young survived only a few days. The apple trees were coming into bloom but no bees droned among the blossoms, so there was no pollination and there would be no fruit. The roadsides, once so attractive, were now lined with browned and withered vegetation as though swept by fire. These, too, were silent, deserted by all living things. Even the streams were now lifeless. Anglers no longer visited them, for all the fish had died.

In the gutters under the eaves and between the shingles of the roofs, a white granular powder still showed a few patches; some weeks before it had fallen like snow upon the roofs and the lawns, the fields and streams. No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it themselves.

This month, over 60 years ago, before some of you were born, when some of you were children, Rachel Carson published this text in a very controversial book. “Silent Spring” was controversial, not because it was offensive in content or foul in language, but because of its honesty and bravery. Carson did not receive hate mail and have her professional name libeled because of deceptive or careless science. It was because she was the “hysterical” woman who spoke a worrisome, non commodifiable truth. And it was her word against wealthy chemical corporations, including Monsanto, as well as many government institutions, including the FDA, that sanctioned the use of the pesticide DDT. Carson warned America that this chemical, which advertisements claimed was safe enough to spray on children, was going to cause irreparable harm to the environment, its wildlife, and its people.

In 1962, the same year that Carson published “Silent Spring,” Kennedy approved Operation Ranch Hand in Vietnam, a U.S. military operation that allowed an estimated 19 million U.S. gallons of pesticides, especially 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D (or agent orange) to be dropped over South Vietnam, its forests, its agricultural fields, and its people. It became apparent, in the years since the spraying of Agent Orange over Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, that the chemical is dangerous. Not only did it cause the mass death of broad leaf plants, but it killed insects, birds, and caused cancers, endocrine diseases, miscarriages, and birth defects in people. It’s a multigenerational crisis. Agent Orange, like DDT, is a chemical that is produced by Monsanto among others, including Dow, companies that accept no responsibility for the war crime committed overseas.

Many people, including those living on the Oregon Coast, don’t realize that until 1979 agent orange was frequently sprayed over the forests here by the US Forest Service, Oregon State Forest, and private timber companies. This program went into effect as Operation Ranch Hand came to a close in Vietnam in the late 60’s and early 70’s, so that the companies producing the chemical could continue to profit from it.

During the decade in which Oregon allowed the spraying of agent orange over its forests, there were increased rates of miscarriages and birth defects. It was citizen research, advocacy, and protest, that successfully banned the usage of one of the two chemical component of agent orange, 2,4,5-T. The other component, 2,4-D, continues to be sprayed aerially and via backpack. Its effects on our health and environment, especially in combination with other pesticides used on our forests, like glyphosate and atrazine, continues to be unknown.

The Sierra Club estimates that “up to 40 percent of the pesticides sprayed onto forestland by helicopters is blown off course from its targets.” This means, especially when we spray on our coastal forests, which often experience windy conditions and often grow on steep slopes, that the narrow parameters prohibiting aerial spraying within 300 feet of schools and homes, 75 feet of fish bearing streams and streams feeding domestic water sources, and 50 feet of non-fish bearing streams, are in no way strict enough regulations to protect our citizens, our flora and fauna, from being dusted with, inhaling, drinking, and bathing in dangerously overused industrial chemicals.

The undemocratic mass spraying conducted by the logging industry, both on private and state lands, is the reason why North Coast Communities for Watershed Protection (NCCWP) was established in 2012 in Rockaway Beach, and has since expanded up and down the coast, with volunteers and members from

Lincoln City to Astoria. Their watershed, Jetty Creek has been privately owned by Stimson Lumber Company and Olympic Resource Management (the latter sold their portion of Jetty Creek to Greenwood Inc in recent years). In the past 2 decades, it has been 95% clearcut and sprayed aerially. Not only have the pesticides applied in the watershed appeared in resident's drinking water, but the increase in runoff as a result of deforestation has increased water turbidity and the amount of disinfectant chemicals used by water treatment facilities. These disinfectants include chlorine and chloramine, which in excess, are known to produce the carcinogenic byproduct trihalomethane. Costs of treatment have become higher since clearcut logging in the watershed began, which is reflected by the water bills sent to Rockaway Beach citizens.

Though Jetty Creek is the poster child of the mismanagement of our watersheds in Oregon, the issue is pervasive. We are lucky here in Astoria that our watershed is owned and managed by the city itself, and remains well regulated. However, There have been some questions about logging activity within the watershed. Therefore it is critical that communities remain vigilant about the management of their drinking water sources.

A 2017 OPB article states that, "water for 40 percent of the drinking water systems on the coast flows through forests owned by private companies that log extensively." Another figure from 2020 states, "Over 75% of Oregon's municipal water supplies come from public and private forestlands — and within the last two decades, more than 24 different Oregon localities have experienced a disappearance of over 40% of the forests surrounding their drinking water sources at the hands of logging (Davis & Schick, 2020). Since the beginning of the 21st century, environmentalists have directly cited commercial timber harvests as a threat to over 170 different public water systems in Oregon (Schick, 2020).

Increased runoff attributed to clearcutting has been closely correlated with the increased use of chemicals by water treatment plants. These new treatment plants have been time consuming and expensive to implement. One example within Clatsop County is Arch Cape, a town that in 2010 had no choice but to spend \$1 million on a new water treatment plan after violating federal water quality standards (Davis & Schick, 2020). Water bills are on the rise, and increased amounts of water treatment chemicals have been linked to cancers as well as skin and respiratory issues in humans (Davis & Schick, 2020).

In 2022 in Clatsop County, 1,366 acres were clearcut and 1,694 acres were sprayed either aerially or via backpack. As aforementioned, drift from aerial spray does not follow the buffer zone boundaries we have implemented within the state.

Many believe the type of industrial logging we currently do is the primary economic driver of our North Coast towns. At the same time that logging is embedded in the region's economy, so too the health and integrity of the forests of Clatsop County. Many nature lovers seek out these forests for culturally important and recreational purposes, including hiking, camping, hunting, and foraging. Recreationalists in Clatsop County brought in \$785 million in revenue in 2019 alone (Mojica et al., 2021), whereas the county produced about \$27.5 million worth of timber to be processed in 2017 (Clatsop County, 2019).

Nancy Webster has long acknowledged this fact — that people who come here to experience our unique natural environment, and who fund a much larger portion of our economy than logging does, have the right to express opinions about our forests and watersheds on the Northwest coast. She often says, “The Coast belongs to all of us.”

And it does. That is why, although this group started with a single, localized focus — protecting the Jetty Creek Watershed of Rockaway Beach from further devastation — we are beginning to expand to reach more communities facing similar issues in clearcutting and pesticide spray. With the kickoff of NCCWP's new Astoria chapter, we hope to make our events — like informational meetings, educational hikes, speaker series, and general public engagement — more accessible to those residing in the Clatsop County area. We envision hosting more water quality testing workshops, documentary screenings, and environmentally themed art shows.

Tomorrow we are starting out strong with a morning beach clean up in partnership with SOLVE at Social Security Beach... We also have some upcoming zoom speaker events planned for November and December. We will have Younes Alila, a hydrologist at University of British Columbia on Wednesday, November 15 at 6PM as well as Herb Hammond, a retired forester with decades of experience critiquing the management of drinking watersheds, on Thursday, December 7 at 6PM. There are so many different ways to participate and engage with the issue of water quality and quantity on our Coast. We are so excited to see you at these future events. We still are working on our current initiative — gathering signatures to show the widespread support for the end of all logging, slash burning, and pesticide spray in our watersheds in OR. Right now, we have about 1700 signatures. If you haven't already, please make sure to sign it tonight, so that we are able to present it to the state legislature and get it on the official ballot to be voted on.

Thank you for listening.

