

Mount Shasta Herald

News

Speakers address water issues at McCloud forum

By Deborra Clayton
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The McCloud Water Commons hosted a community water forum Saturday at McCloud High School.

MWC members Lori Vance, Betsy Phair, Deborah Anderson and Diane Lowe brought speakers active in water issues and environmental concerns from Michigan, Oregon and several cities in California to talk about the proposed McCloud Nestlé Waters NA bottling facility.

Lowe indicated that MWC had arranged the water forum because of community responses to the proposed Nestlé project.

"You are the reason we are here," she told the crowd.

As residents of McCloud, the MWC members expressed dissatisfaction with the level of public input in the Nestlé contract terms and negotiations and with what Lowe described as the district's "ongoing rush to wrap it up."

"Our community's opportunity for involvement and knowledge before the signing of the contract was, at best, limited," she said.

Vance reflected on the September 30, 2003 district meeting wherein community members voiced their concerns in the hours before the contract was signed, telling the estimated 200 people in attendance Saturday, "We expected our questions and concerns would be considered."

Debra Anderson, a fifth generation McCloud resident, told the group, "If McCloud hands over our water rights for 100 years to a foreign company, we owe it to our children's children to know the facts."

The guest presenters addressed various aspects of the proposed facility MWC feels were not adequately explored by the McCloud Community Services District before the Nestlé contract was signed last September.

Caleen Sisk-Franco, Winnemum Wintu tribal chief, opened the forum by speaking of the respect her tribe holds for water.

"Water is precious. Water has life. We sing to the water because we know it is the life blood of everything," Sisk- Franco said, adding, "No matter how hard we sing and how hard we dance, the water will go away if not cared for properly."

Michigan resident Terry Swier spoke of the successful lawsuit her group, Michigan for Citizens Water Conservation, filed against Nwana regarding a water bottling facility in Mecosta County, Michigan.

Swier said the ruling is currently under appeal.

Christopher Grobbel, who holds an M.A. in hydro-geology and a PhD. in environmental law, spoke to the environmental and economic impacts of the Nestlé plant in Michigan.

Mount Shasta resident Meadow Barr, currently in New York, talked about researching the hydrology science specific to Siskiyou County for her master's thesis.

Barr said she had posed questions to various private and federal hydrologists about the impact of adding a third water bottling plant to the area.

"The studies just haven't been done here. Volcanic rock is very different than rock in other places," she said.

Joshua Skov, who holds an M.A. in economics from U.C. Berkeley, addressed the Economic Impact Report generated prior to Nestlé's submission of a project plan to the Siskiyou County planning department.

Telling the group his goal at the forum was to "assist with the inquiry," Skov offered his opinion that the EIA was not transparent in terms of process and suitability, uncertain in some areas, and missing important elements in others.

Cindy Carpenter of the Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center read a statement written by environmental research associate Peggy Risch about the concerns generated by the opening of the Dannon water bottling facility in Mount Shasta.

Nancy Price, a member of the Alliance for Democracy who lives in Davis, urged the group to submit the concerns generated by the forum to the county planning department for inclusion in the Environmental Impact Report currently underway in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

She said members of the MWC would take to the planning department all comments written out and turned in at the forum.

A complimentary meal was served to anyone who wished to talk with the presenters during dinner and stay for the final hour of questions and answers.