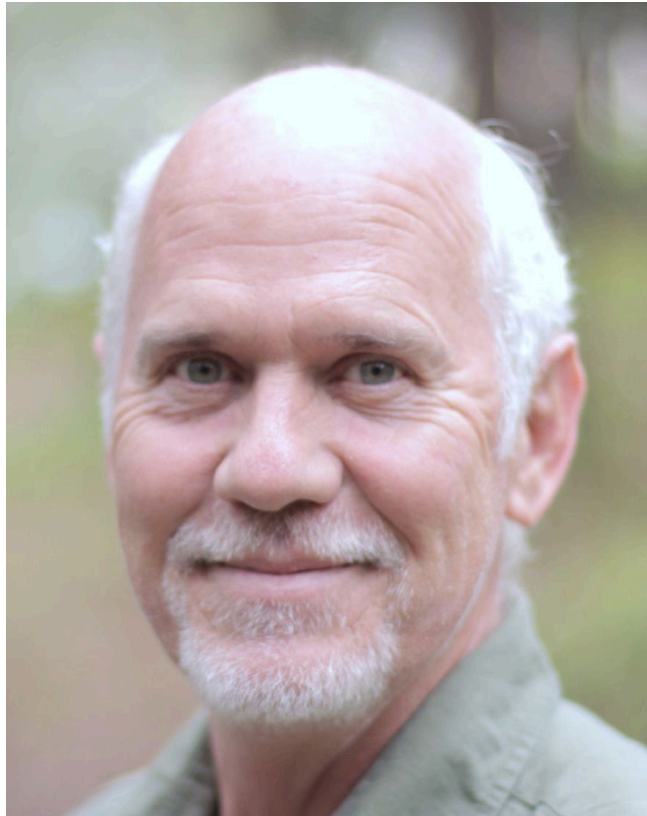

View from the Left: Save the Planet - One Watershed at a Time

December 19, 2022



Last week, 588,000 gallons of oil leaked into Mill Creek and there has been very little news coverage of this. The good news is that this oil spill did not occur in our local Mill Creek which is prime salmon spawning habitat. The bad news is that it happened in someone else's backyard.

An environmental calamity happened when the Keystone Pipeline ruptured and more than a half million gallons of tar sands oil was dumped in the Mill Creek which runs through rural pastureland in Washington County, Kansas. Tar sands oil is especially difficult to clean up because it is heavy and sinks to the bottom of rivers and creeks.

The Keystone Pipeline is operated by Canada based TC Energy and runs from Canada to Oklahoma. This oil is then shipped to Texas where it is refined into gasoline for export out of the Country. The Canadian company profits, other countries benefit, but all the risk is born by the states that the pipeline passes through.

This recent pipeline breach is the largest onshore incident since 2010 and is exactly the type of accident that was feared by those who oppose the development of new pipelines for carrying oil and gas. Leaks eventually will happen, and someone's environment will suffer the consequences.

While this corporate debacle does not directly affect us in California, it does serve as a reminder that environmental protection requires constant vigilance. The amount of global ecological destruction seems insurmountable, but we can do our part to save the planet one watershed at a time.

This is precisely what I have been doing through my association with the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment. I am a founding board member of this non-profit organization that was started 30 years ago.

Our mission is to "support grassroots initiatives that help build a world in which individuals, organizations, and communities are empowered to promote stewardship of nature, inspire people to take action, and hold government and corporations accountable."

Last month the Rose Foundation Board of Directors approved a \$10 million budget which will be funded in part by \$7.7 million in restitution payments. These restitution payments will come from court ordered penalties that companies must pay when they violate environmental and consumer protection laws.

The Rose Foundation is designated by the courts to distribute these funds through grants to community organizations that will take actions to counteract the negative impacts that these bad actors caused.

The last 8 years, I worked as the Program Officer managing all the Rose Foundation funds in Oregon and Washington. I administered millions of dollars of grant awards to projects in the Columbia River, Spokane River, Chehalis River, Grays Harbor and Puget Sound watersheds.

With combined funding in California and the Pacific Northwest, the Rose Foundation has enabled a coordinated defense against polluting fossil fuel projects. We have funded groups from Los Angeles to the Canadian Border that have opposed risky fossil fuel transportation projects including port developments for oil and coal export.

It makes no sense from a local or global perspective to allow trains to move coal to a west coast port for export to Asia, where this dirty fuel will be burned, and the resultant air pollution will be blown back to us on the prevailing winds.

However, corporations are relentless in probing for weaknesses, looking for the local agency that will permit rail transportation from the coal fields of Wyoming or the oil fields of Canada for export to other countries. Like leaks from pipelines, oil spills from rail accidents are inevitable. Sometimes these train wrecks explode and the fires are nearly impossible to extinguish.

We are fortunate that our local watersheds are relatively clean and well protected. With the adoption of the Smith River National Recreation Area Act in 1990, the pristine and free flowing Smith River has been mostly

protected from impacts by mining and other commercial developments. However, it is important that we remain vigilant in protecting the Smith River from all direct or indirect sources of contamination.

Recently, there has been great progress toward restoring the Klamath River. Over the next several years, four unnecessary dams will be removed from the Klamath River. This action will start the process of restoring water quality and open hundreds of miles of salmon habitat.

The third priority local watershed is our section of the Pacific Ocean which is still relatively unpolluted compared to elsewhere. This is why our local seafood is so tasty. Clean fish and crab come from clean water.

You do not have to work for an environmental foundation to do something good for our ecosystem. Please consider contributing or volunteering for one of the local groups that are dedicated to restoration or protection of our local watersheds.

When the world's problems seem beyond resolution, I recommend focusing on one achievable action. Do something positive and you will feel better.

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