

HOOD RIVER NEWS
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
April 7, 2003

Resort plans

Remember those county land trade hearings in August 2001? Remember how almost everyone who spoke against the trade warned it would give Mount Hood Meadows the land needed to build a destination resort?

Remember how our commissioners assured us the trade was "only about timber?" Remember how Meadows V.P. Dave Riley echoed that, and added that no plans had yet been presented for a destination resort?

Obviously Mr. Riley meant no plans had been presented to the public, the taxpayers, the residents of this county.

In "A Valley's Acres of Anger" (The Sunday Oregonian, March 9, 2003) investigative reporter Alex Pulaski wrote that as early as April 13, 2001, "two resort planning maps" had been "e-mailed to a member of the county's planning staff" by Meadows planning director Steve Warila. "Three days later," Pulaski wrote, "county commissioners endorsed House Bill 3585, which would have relaxed state rules for siting destination resorts. The bill died in committee."

"By late June," continued Pulaski, "county officials – including County Administrator David Meriwether and then-Commissioner Arens – were meeting with Riley to discuss a land trade. They also met in July (2001) in Salem with state land-use planners to talk about the trade and a destination resort."

And, of course, the public hearings were barely over before Dave Riley began trotting around to groups he felt would favor a destination resort, showing "plans for a golf course, ice-skating rink, stores and as many as 450 dwellings near Cooper Spur."

Does anyone seriously believe that those detailed plans were drawn up between the last hearing on August 20, 2001, and Mr. Riley's presentations which began only a few days later?

The entire land trade process, as Pulaski makes abundantly clear, has involved deception, cover-up, secret hearings, and the questionable appraisal of the land involved. When was the last time you saw upper valley forest land for sale at \$325/acre?

There is much more to this story than one letter can cover. For more details, curious readers should visit our library and read The Sunday Oregonian, March 9, 2003, pages A-17 and 20.

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