

Port, bikes shouldn't mix

Editor, *The Journal*:

Looks like the Port of Shelton must finally attend to the problem of dirt bikers marshaling on the airport. Now is probably a good time to resolve this issue; it's one that's been considered before, and sooner or later it has to be resolved. I know the port commissioners like to be good guys, but sometimes they shouldn't be, and this is one of those times.

Dirt bikes don't fly and therefore those who ride them have no claim to the use of an airport. The port commissioners' oath of office obligates them to operate Sanderson as an airport, to protect the airport from encroachment and to provide those who fly with a safe and liability-free facility to the degree possible. There is no obligation to accommodate nonairport-dependent uses, therefore, regardless of the merits of dirt-bike riding, it belongs somewhere else.

I'm not sure why the port is looking into the question of liability, as reported in *The Journal*. There is no liability associated with dirt bikes where there are no dirt bikes. I suspect, however, that with dirt bikers using the airport the liability is much greater than the commission may realize. As I understand the activity, bikers unload on the airport and then ride off port property to enter private land, where they are not entirely welcome and where they negatively impact forest land. As a forester with 35 years of experience, I can attest that rubber tires and trees are not compatible. On flat land they compact the soil, and on slopes they dig into the soil, exposing and cutting tree roots, increasing the opportunity for root rot and reducing the productivity of the stand.

I don't think the port can sanction dirt-bike use at the airport without incurring liability for encouraging trespass and financial loss to adjacent landowners. The port has a more assessable and deeper pocket than a dirt biker. It's not worth the risk.

There is another issue, one that may be more interesting than serious. The land immediately south of the fairgrounds is the location used by Rayonier to dispose of pulp liquor (sulfite cooking acid). It's a mixture of dissolved sulfur dioxide and sodium bisulfate; it's very acidic. It's also quite viscous and will stay where it's dumped. (I'm a novice at chemistry so any reader moved to correct my words, feel free.)

My point here is to call attention to the fact that digging up dust while riding through this area is not a good practice and could lead to charges of negligence and liability on behalf of the port if it appears that the port is sanctioning the activity. Especially if someone decides their ailments were caused by exposure to a toxic substance. Courts and lawyers love this kind of setup. It would bode the port well to make sure access to adjacent lands from port property is closed and fenced.

In my opinion the purpose of ports in this state is to provide transportation facilities and industrial parks. Seaports, airports, rail yards, marinas and the like are only feasible when they are collectively owned and operated facilities. Industrial parks provide fire protection, all-season roads and power and gas at substantial levels of use, as required by industry. But most important of all, especially with a liberal court system, ports provide separation of the general population

from potentially harmful activities.

In the past port commissioners haven't appreciated the value of isolation and, as a result, have approved activities such as race tracks, campgrounds and ballfields, all of which proved to be unmanageable and uninsurable to the degree required. I don't think it is possible for dirt-bike users to indemnify the port, either from personal injury or from damage claims that may come from landowners. Better to prohibit all uses that encourage large numbers of people to mingle with industry and aircraft, up front.

As far as the commissioners are concerned, I would be happy to support any one of them for reelection. The appearance of the port is first-class, we are seeing the addition of orderly and well-designed light industrial buildings, and there is a steady increase in the kind of jobs that our community should appreciate. They have a favorable, business-like rapport with the manager, who is doing a nice job. Previous commissioners have done a great job of improving airport and industrial facilities. We have one of the best general aviation airports in the region.

If I could give the present commissioners some advice it would be to continue the policies of recent years, manage the airport as an airport and let the state or county look after the various recreational activities and interests, on their property. It's their job, not yours. All but aviation and light industrial belong somewhere other than on Sanderson.

4-14-05 Norm Eveleth
Arcadia

(Editor's note: The writer was once the port's manager.)

Backed out on promise

Editor, *The Journal*:

The Shelton School District's February 6, 2001 bond measure was passed after publication of a half-page ad on three projects — a new middle school, a new Evergreen Elementary and remodeling of Bordeaux School

Along with the three above projects, in *fine print*, was the statement: "The Shelton Gymnasium (Brown Gym) will remain for school and community use."

When you file a claim against your warranty, contract, insurance claim, etc. many times

you lose because of the fine print. We have the needed schools voted on, but what happened to the *fine-print promise* that the Brown Gym would remain?

Pauline Aldrich
Shelton

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