

July 19, 2013

This is an example of the worst case of mis-informed activists linking arms with the anti-environment right. I've worked for more than 35 years with myriad colleagues to improve livability and the environment in Portland and the metropolitan region. There is no agency, hands down, that has done more to protect the environment and improve neighborhood and city livability than Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services.....Metro Greenspaces, Portland Parks, notwithstanding.

I have personally witnessed and participated in the evolution of BES from being a pipe-oriented sewer bureau to its current incarnation as a watershed health bureau. BES has more dedicated, highly skilled ecologists on staff than any agency in the region. This ill-conceived attempt to wrest BES from the city will set back environmental conservation in our city thirty years. That's what the big, corporate water users and developers want. And the self-proclaimed citizen activists are aiding and abetting the take over, in their awesome ignorance of the facts.

Do not sign their initiative petition. Learn the facts. Bob Sallinger, Conservation Director of the Audubon Society of Portland is a good place to start. I am more than happy to answer your questions at mikehouck@urbangreenspaces.org.

One fact no one among the would be petitioners has mentioned: The reservoirs are already obsolete and their future is open to question. All the Water Bureau need do is flip the switch on Powell Butte and Portland's drinking water will flow to your taps. The reservoirs are a huge red herring that the petitioners are using to rile up public opinion. What is the fate of the reservoirs? Remains to be seen, but EPA's mandate they be covered is not longer relevant with the Powell Butte reservoirs going online.

Before signing any petition, do your homework. The proposal to take BES from the City would be an environmental disaster. I know after 35 years dedicated to improving Portland's environment and access to nature.

Mike Houck, Director
Urban Greenspaces Institute
www.urbangreenspaces.org