

Community Update—Spring 2018: Our Struggle Continues

Water for Citizens of Weed, California (WCWC) was formed in early 2016 by members of the Weed community, including three former mayors, in response to the acute threat we face to our City's main supply of water—the pure spring water we have depended on for more than 100 years. WCWC is

working to protect and secure this water and to oppose the attempt of Roseburg Forest Products, through legal sleight of hand, to take this water away from our community all so they can profit from it as a commodity to be bought and sold. WCWC also wants to help strengthen our community's capacity to provide affordable and safe water, sewer and fire services to all of its people.

In 2017 we had significant success—but we still face an ongoing struggle to regain the right to our community's water. The fight is not over and we continue to need the support and involvement of our friends and neighbors in Weed, as well as other allies, to succeed.

Developments in 2017: Early in the year WCWC initiated a complaint to our local water master district and State water agencies asking them to investigate the situation. We provided documentation we have uncovered that indicates that the City of Weed has a strong claim to the Beaghan Springs water in question. We then asked the City Council of Weed to support our complaint. In May the council agreed, on a 5-0 vote, to do so.

Roseburg, apparently surprised and stung by the fact that they didn't have the City Council in their pocket, reacted by immediately suing our WCWC group, nine individuals associated with our group and the City of Weed. The City of Weed then countersued Roseburg, making a legal claim of its own on the water. The legal battle was on!

WCWC soon realized that our group, and the named individuals, were the victims of a "SLAPP" suit (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) meant to intimidate us into silence. Instead of giving in to this intimidation we fought back with the help of a legal team which specializes in SLAPP suits. In December we went to court and had a big legal victory—the judge agreed that WCWC and the nine individuals should not have been named in the lawsuit and that Roseburg would have to pay our legal costs.

However, this is not the end of the story! While we are no longer individual targets of Roseburg's intimidation, the case between the City and Roseburg continues since the court has not yet made a decision about the larger issue of who rightfully controls the Beaghan Springs water. *



The court case and our struggle in general have attracted a lot of media attention—locally, regionally, nationally and internationally: In late 2017 a documentary film about our struggle, *Water Town*, was released by San Francisco producer Maya Craig. A team of investigative journalists from the United Kingdom also visited in 2017 and are highlighting Weed water issues in the forth episode of a Fusion TV series on Food and Water, for release in early 2018 (<https://fusion.tv/show/food-exposed-with-nelufar-hedayat/?scrollto=full-episodes>).

2018: Our Campaign Continues: Moving forward it is very important that the people of Weed stay engaged in this issue. We will continue to monitor the court battle between the City and Roseburg. We understand that the discovery process, plus some additional documents recently obtained by the City of Weed, have considerably strengthened the City's case. However, a final legal resolution of the case is still many months, if not years, away. We also don't want to put all of our eggs in the legal basket—while we believe Weed has a very strong case, courts are unpredictable. But what we are 100% confident of is that Roseburg's attempt to take away our water is unethical and unbecoming of a company that claims to be socially responsible.

So we intend to keep the pressure up on Roseburg and continue to call attention to its unethical and greedy behavior.

We will continue research and advocacy on the issue of Weed's legal, historical and ethical rights to the spring water upon which our town has always depended and support the City's case however we can.

We are also looking at how the City of Weed could be better reimbursed for the loss of our water resources, as well as other impacts, stemming from the industrial water bottling already taking place in our community.

We are committed to this issue but we continue to need your help! Beyond the ethical issue this is a financial issue—having to pay fees to Roseburg and to start looking for alternative water sources has already resulted in increases to everyone's water bills. If we lose our water all together we can expect these costs to increase much further!

Please see our new website www.waterforweedca.org for more information: You can help us by spreading the word to your friends and neighbors and letting your council members know that this is an important issue to you! Please also consider a new donation to WCWC, even if you have supported us in the past, for 2018.

* In a separate case, a group called Weed Area Water Alliance has sued the City of Weed and Roseburg alleging that the Water Lease Agreement between the two entities violates the California Environmental Quality Act and is in violation of fair business practice laws. WCWC is not involved in this case.
