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**Forestry Company Faces Challenge to Its “Responsible Timber” Certification After Waging Intimidation Campaign Against Local Community**

WEED, CALIFORNIA - Citizens of Weed, California filed a complaint today with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) after Oregon-based Roseburg Forest Products refused to stop its abusive tactics in a bid to privatize the community’s main source of drinking water.

The complaint alleges that Roseburg, which operates a lumber mill in Weed, has violated the human rights of local residents by trying to take control of the city’s primary source of drinking water, a spring on nearby Mt. Shasta, so that it can force the City off the water and then sell it to the international water bottling industry. The company has sought to intimidate the community into silence, suing nine community leaders who objected to the company’s actions. The right to raise such concerns is protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution as well as being integral to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights.

The FSC is an international body that is charged with certifying the sustainability of timber companies’ operations around the globe. Roseburg Forest Products has touted its FSC certification as proof of its “green” credentials, even while pursuing malicious legal bullying tactics to grab the City of Weed’s water and silence community opposition. However, an important part of FSC certification involves human rights and how companies treat the communities in which they operate.

In December 2017, a California Superior court [dismissed Roseburg’s lawsuit](#) against the nine named individuals, finding that the lawsuit was an attack on these citizens’ constitutionally protected free speech. These types of intimidating “SLAPP” (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) lawsuits are bullying tactics increasingly used by corporations to silence their critics. However, Roseburg has appealed the decision and is using delaying tactics to keep the lawsuit in court for as long as possible.

Among the nine individuals named in the lawsuit by Roseburg are prominent members of the City including a 92 year-old former mayor/retired mill employee, another former mayor of the City who is also a retired mill employee, a standing member of the Weed City Council, an artist/member of the Weed Planning Commission, and a retired businessman who is currently

the volunteer coordinator of the Weed Historical Lumber Museum, who was twice named Weed's "Citizen of the Year," was on the Weed Elementary School Board for 21 years, and was the recipient of the first Community Service Award from Weed High School.

At the same time, Roseburg is continuing to pursue a long and expensive lawsuit against the City of Weed in an effort to force the community off its main source of drinking water. It was revealed in 2016 that Roseburg plans to sell the water to Crystal Geyser Roxane, a private water company that already has a plant in town. Crystal Geyser Roxane wants more of the water supply from Beaghan Spring in order to increase its bottling and shipping of spring water to Japan and other locations.

Despite having strong legal and ethical arguments on its side, the vulnerable and economically disadvantaged City of Weed faces difficulty affording hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal costs as it tries to respond to Roseburg's well-resourced legal assault. As of December, 2018, the lawsuit had cost the City of Weed more than \$400,000.

In December 2018, Weed residents rallied outside of Roseburg's headquarters in Springfield, Oregon. At the rally, they delivered a letter to Roseburg with two demands: to drop its SLAPP lawsuit against Weed citizens, and to honor the intention of its predecessor company – International Paper – to officially recognize the town's rights to the spring water. Roseburg has so far refused to acknowledge the concerns raised by Weed residents.

## **STATEMENTS**

*Jim Taylor, President of Water for Citizens of Weed, CA (WCWC),* said, "Roseburg takes great pride in portraying its products as green and sustainable. But a company that acts in this manner does not deserve those labels. We are calling on the Forest Stewardship Council to revoke the company's certification until Roseburg begins to act in a more responsible and ethical manner. Sustainability needs to be based on partnership with local communities, not on bullying."

*Geneva Omann of WCWC* said, "The United Nations and the State of California both recognize access to water as a basic human right. By trying to take away our community's water, and then suing anyone who spoke out on the issue, Roseburg has acted with disregard for basic human rights and the well-being of our community."

*Bruce Shoemaker of WCWC* said, "Roseburg Forest Products is able to sell lumber certified as green and sustainable to customers at a premium price. We would like to see customers of Roseburg's FSC-certified forest products refrain from further purchases until our complaint over their practices is satisfactorily resolved."

### Additional Information:

WCWC's December 2018 letter to Roseburg Forest Products as well as the complaint that WCWC submitted today to the FSC is available at: <https://waterforweedca.org/media-news>  
More info on SLAPP suits and the campaign to end them is available here: <https://www.protecttheprotest.org>