



# JIM TAYLOR (SLAPPED FOR PROTECTING HIS COMMUNITIES’ WATER SOURCE)

Tags: Roseburg, Water is life, Weed 9



## SLAPPED for protecting his community’s water source

Jim Taylor, is the President of Water for Citizens of Weed, CA (WCWC). For over 100 years, Weed residents have relied on a nearby Mount Shasta spring as their main source of drinking water. Roseburg Forest Products wants to sell it to the international bottled water industry. To add insult to injury, the company SLAPped a number of residents fighting for their water rights to silence community opposition. The judge found the citizens of Weed not responsible, and dismissed the case in 2017. Roseburg appealed the decision. In December 2019, in a victory for free speech, Roseburg agreed to drop its bullying lawsuit against WCWC and nine members of the Weed community.

Answers edited for length and clarity. Jim spoke with Virginia Cleaveland from Stand.earth and former PTP member.

## Why did you decide to get involved and speak out against this issue?

I learned that if something was not done, the city of Weed, CA would lose its water. After doing what little research I could do on my own, I felt there was enough proof that the water rights were actually intended to be given to the city. I felt that some of the “powers that be” at city hall were trying to take the easy way out, and I felt it was getting shoved down our throats that “This was the way it was going to go.” I felt that if somebody didn’t speak up, the city manager was going to get his way. So we formed a group, called the Weed 9, and we held steadfast through the whole thing. This was really just an example of wanting to make sure that the process was fair with what was going on in the city.

We asked Roseburg to show us proof that they actually had the water and it was legally theirs. They never showed us anything. We dug back through records into the 1930s, and we felt we had the proof, but it was largely based on Roseburg’s intentions to give the water to the city. When Roseburg started the business of taking our water away, we felt that it was a money thing for them — they were going to take the water and sell it to Crystal Geyser. And we just didn’t feel that that was right. It was our livelihood. It was our water. And then Roseburg stepped in and sued us with a SLAPP suit. So that was the beginning of our fight.

## How has the issue impacted you and your community?

We petitioned the city council to support our efforts and they voted to support our group. Then the very next day, the nine of us got served with a 300+ page lawsuit from Roseburg. They had this thing waiting for us for some time. They were just waiting on a situation to present it to us.

The SLAPP suit drew the nine of us closer. We come from all walks of life and businesses and professions. It was a huge shock to the nine of us when we got a knock on our doors. It scared all of us to death.

## What was it like when you found out you were being sued?

It was just a frightful thing because none of us had ever been into anything like this. It was a true David and Goliath situation. We had very few resources and Roseburg was a multimillion dollar company. And whether they were right or wrong, money sometimes wins out. And that’s what scared all of us. In the end, thanks to pro bono lawyers, our individual contributions to the lawsuit was around \$475 for each one of us. But we were always afraid that if the lawsuit went against us, then we stood to lose our houses or whatever else. So that was a big fear in the beginning. It hangs over your head. You think about it 24/7, you go to bed at night and wake up in the morning and you think “What other shoe is going to fall?” It’s stressful.

## Have you ever been involved in free speech activity in the past? What does speaking up mean to you and did this experience change how you think about free speech?

I’ve tried to stay active in the community, but I’ve never experienced anything like this, much less being sued for speaking out. Speaking out to me is — I’m old school — and I think what’s right is right. And in this particular incident it just felt wrong. And that’s why I’ve stayed the course and stayed with our group fighting this. The experience hasn’t changed how I think about free speech. Free speech is what it should be — as long as you’re not making slanderous remarks, then I think everybody should stand up.

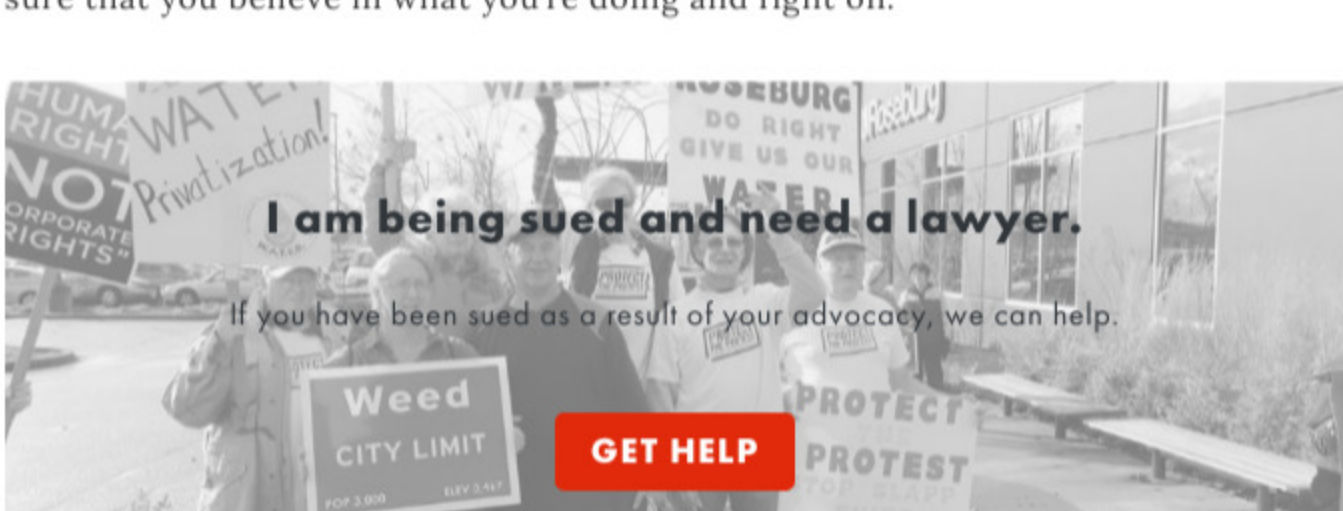
## Why didn’t you give up? Was quitting ever an option? This massive company came after you and you could have walked away, but you didn’t. Why?

Stubbornness is part of it. We felt that we were in the right, and all we had to do is produce documents we felt would show the judge that the water was absolutely meant to be for the citizens of Weed. We feel that Roseburg selling the water to Crystal Geyser should be the very last thing when it comes to the use of the water. It should be for public consumption first.

Quitting was never an option for any of us. The nine of us have stuck it through through thick and thin. When the company came after us, it scared us and we had to talk amongst ourselves and encourage one another to stay the course. And fortunately the nine of us did. We felt we were 100% in the right in our case, and we were stubborn enough not to give up.

## What would you say to someone facing a similar threat, similar SLAPP suit?

Do your research and make sure you think you’re in the right. Above all, if you think you’re right, morally and legally don’t give up. **Just be the bulldog and stay with it.** If you believe you’re right, work through all the hardships and don’t give up — even when you’re facing a company with a multimillion dollar budget. Make sure that you believe in what you’re doing and fight on.



Read more:



## Roseburg Forest Products and City of Weed settle water rights conflict

KTV News 10

## Forestry Company Faces Challenge to Its “Responsible Timber” Certification

Citizens of Weed, California filed a complaint 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.



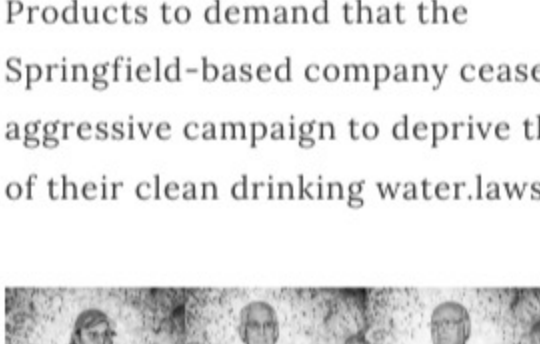
## Timber Industry Sidesteps Request to Investigate U.S. Company’s Human Rights Violations

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the industry body that certifies “responsible timber,” has declined to investigate a complaint filed by Water for Citizens of Weed, California (WCWC) against Oregon-based Roseburg Forest Products.



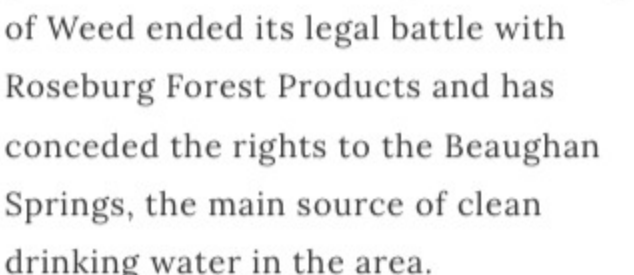
## The ‘Weed 9’ Rallies Against Corporate Water Grab and Legal Bullying

Residents of Weed, California are rallying today outside the headquarters of Roseburg Forest Products to demand that the Springfield-based company cease its aggressive campaign to deprive them of their clean drinking water.lawsuits.





## Case Update: Despite Retreat from City of Weed, ‘Weed 9’ Remain Resolute in Fight Against SLAPP


On August 11, Water for Citizens of Weed, California (WCWC) issued a press release announcing that the City of Weed ended its legal battle with Roseburg Forest Products and has conceded the rights to the Beaughan Springs, the main source of clean drinking water in the area.





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