

Shady or Shadowy Wood Landing

Letter to the editor by Steph Winter

In my opinion CFS LLC's proposed development of Shadow Wood Landing in the Town of Russell has become a class culture war. Because many members of our town live on the edge of survivability, this is a prime location for developers like CFS to gobble up huge chunks of land for cheap.

What they then choose to do with that land seems to be of little or no consequence to those who live here. Red Cliff tribal members, people who have lived their whole lives here, those who quietly conduct their businesses here (for example, the immediate neighbors to the project and the fruit orchards that lie nearby), and those who move here in retirement or otherwise migrate to this area are being assured of the wide benefits this development will provide. We are told by CFS, LLC President and CEO Annalisa Cariveau that we need to trust her to do the right thing. But why should we?

Over recent weeks and months I've heard about and witnessed an ongoing narrative of subtle harassment, intimidation, and veiled threats aimed at those who speak up about and try to make their concerns known regarding this development even as we're encouraged to offer our input. And, if my neighbors and local businesses are already being pressured into silence at the risk of losing their jobs and right livelihoods before this development begins construction what further manipulations and exploitations can we expect after this project is fully underway?

On a recent radio program Australian philosopher Glenn Albrecht described a word that he's invented to symbolize the issue that rages beneath the surface of this debate: solastalgia. This concept describes the distress humans directly experience from environmental change. He writes: "There are places on earth that are not being completely 'lost,' but are being 'transformed.' People who are not voluntarily nor forcibly removed from their homes can also experience place-based distress in the face of the lived experience of profound environmental change."

Albrecht goes on to explain that solastalgia is a 'lived experience,' a feeling of being undermined by forces that destroy the potential for solace in the place one considers their home. He goes on to say, and I quote, "The concept of solastalgia has relevance in any context where there is the direct experience of negative transformation ... of the physical environment (home) by forces that undermine a personal and community sense of identity, belonging and control."

For me, the potential loss of peaceful, quiet skies is a profound change in my environment. The political and personal maneuverings that are being employed to facilitate that change is equally disturbing. That says nothing about the changes to our lands and waters that are already taking place.

Despite CEO Cariveau's many well-chosen words and phrases to describe the care her company plans to invest in the lands they own and the development they foresee, it's obvious that what she says and what she does differ wildly. CFS, LLC already managed to elude the Wisconsin State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the U.S. Corps of Engineers by denying access to their construction site while their construction activities destroyed all evidence of an existing intermittent stream and wetlands.

Citations filed in Bayfield Circuit Court charge CFS LLC with failure to control erosion, failure to develop an erosion control plan, and failure to obtain a construction site storm water permit before land disturbance took place.

What concerned citizens are talking about is a quality of life issue that has little to do with money and everything to do with beauty, peace, and a lived-connection with Mother Earth. These lands, waters and trees that surround us have value to our souls and spirits but for those desiring to stuff their wallets that value is easily disregarded.

These next few weeks could well determine the future of the towns of Russell, Bayfield and beyond. Please attend the following meeting to express your thoughts: Bayfield County Board meeting, March 30, 6 p.m.