

Hello, this is Tom Cookman with a Community Comment.

Last week my wife and I met a very nice couple from Florida. One of the first comments from the husband was, "You sure have a lot of homeless people." It is a statement that I hear time and time again from out of town guests, because the situation has reached epic proportions. I know that all the powers to be are discussing solutions to this problem, but the only thing that is happening is, it's getting worse. I've lived in Humboldt County my entire life and have been puzzled at the resistance developers encounter when they try to improve a piece of property. Oddly, in regards to the destruction around the bay from the people illegally living there, I haven't heard a peep from the organizations that claim to care so much about the environment. Last week it was reported that the homeless camp inhabitants behind the Bayshore Mall are responsible for at least 150,000 pounds of raw sewage seeping into Humboldt Bay every year. Where is the outcry from Humboldt Baykeeper? This quantity of human waste contamination should be something that they are absolutely committed to fixing. Who wants to eat a clam or a fish or an oyster or a crab that is caught in our bay? The percentage of homeless drug users that have hepatitis is quite high. These hepatitis-infected drug addicts are using Humboldt Bay as a toilet. If we don't clean out 100% of that camp, and do it fast, it will be only be a matter of time before someone gets sick from eating seafood that came out of Humboldt Bay. When this happens, it will be an economic disaster. We've already crippled our once vibrant timber industry and our tourism is taking a serious hit because of the homeless. Businesses and individuals are being victimized by the transients, and one of our greatest economic assets, Humboldt Bay, is being polluted right before our eyes. It's mind-boggling to see how little our

government is doing to solve this problem. We have people who are committed to feeding the poor. It is commendable to have that compassion in your heart, but for the most part feeding them is only enabling them to buy drugs and alcohol with the money the government gives them for food. I see caring people delivering food to the homeless camp, these transients can't make it to a free meal, but are able to travel all over town for their drugs and alcohol. At least make them exert some effort to get their meals. There is a difference between helping the poor and enabling the lazy, and the current approach is only compounding the problem. The first thing that needs to immediately be done is to clean out every single camp behind the Bayshore Mall. Cut all the vegetation out so they won't return. I'd rather have some silt get washed into the bay after everything is removed than have the hundreds of thousands of pounds of raw sewage. It would be in our best interest to have a government-sponsored homeless camp. Any of the closed lumber mill sites would be a good place to start. If a person needs help, they could stay in that facility. If they refuse this help, and prefer to wander the streets, incarcerate them. Other communities do not have a homeless problem to the degree we have because they don't make it easy for them to live in the bushes or on the sidewalks. In short, they don't enable them to set up a miles-long camp with free food and drug money.

This has been Tom Cookman with a Community Comment