

LETTERS

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With additional funding for fire-prevention work and restoration projects and support from these partners, we can continue the pace and scale of improving the health of our forests and protecting our communities.

Unfortunately, even with our local efforts, each year, firefighting costs consume more of the USDA Forest Service's budget. In 1995, firefighting costs accounted 15 percent of the Forest Service budget. In 2017, it was 57 percent. If the current rate of growth continues firefighting may consume 67 percent of our budget by 2021.

This will result in fewer funds for USDA Forest Service programs and services, including recreation, visitor services, and, as I mentioned, much-needed fire-prevention work that reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfires in the first place.

The Forest Service is required to fund its entire emergency management program through its regular appropriations. In the Pacific Northwest, this funding model means projects, like those on the Deschutes National Forest, designed to decrease the severity of wildfire are being delayed. Additionally, maintenance of recreation sites and critical infrastructure is being deferred.

While on the Deschutes National Forest we will continue our work with elected officials, local and state agencies, partners and volunteers to leverage resources and accomplish more than we could by ourselves; our current fiscal path is unsustainable.

In the end, I want to express my appreciation for the many people in Central Oregon, including our local elected officials, who are working to find solutions to the fire-funding challenge for our agency and for all the support we receive in managing these important public lands for the benefit of current and future generations.

John Allen
Forest Supervisor, Deschutes National Forest

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To the Editor:

After viewing the art proposals of the finalists chosen by the Art Selection Committee for the US Highway 20 and Barclay Drive roundabout, I believe that only one of the three, Danae Bennett-Miller's "A Land of Contrasts," represents Sisters as the "Gateway to Central Oregon."

The many visitors who pass through our community, and particularly those who arrive from the west, are here for the scenic beauty of our land and what our mountains, forests, deserts and wildlife have to offer. "A Land of Contrasts" reflects all these. More than the other two selections, it will effectively block the view of the opposing highway and serve to slow traffic down as drivers and other vehicle occupants view its scenes. Children, in particular, will enjoy and identify the animals, which are a major part of the installation. While slowing down traffic, Bennett-Miller's work is not so excessive in detail or its design so abstract to require drivers to fully stop to see what it has to offer or comprehend what it represents. It requires no explanation and its appeal will be universal — or fairly close to it. The other two proposals, however, would be more fitting for the grounds of a gallery or museum, or a college campus, where they may be viewed and discussed with leisure by those who enjoy that type of work.

Danae Bennett-Miller lives and works in Central Oregon, just down the road in Tumalo, in fact. She is one of us. Sisters residents and members of other local communities must live with the choice of the Art Selection Committee and the approval of the Sisters City Council, and what visitors see will reflect on us. Hopefully the selection will be one which we understand, enjoy and can all be proud of.

Bill Bachman

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To the Editor:

A big shout-out of thanks to the City of Sisters leadership for definitively spelling out the guidelines for tree-cutting/removal to all!

Kay Payne

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To the Editor:

Once again, Craig Rullman, *The Bunkhouse Chronicle* (*The Nugget*, February 7) would like you to believe that Republicans and Democrats are equally corrupt. He also suggests that both candidates and both parties tried to manipulate votes in the 2016 election. The thing is, there is absolutely no evidence that Democrats, the FBI or "corrupt attorneys in the Department of Justice" attempted to influence the election in favor of

Hillary Clinton. To believe that, or even to suggest it as one possible scenario, is so ridiculous it's laughable.

Mr. Rullman, you have a platform. Instead of repeating the incredibly dumb, paranoid narrative from right-wing media about deep state conspiracies and witch-hunts, you could do a little research. I suggest listening to Pod Save America. Start with the February 1, 2018, episode "An insult to banana republics." These guys are funny and smart. They break down the reckless and desperate Devin Nunes memo and discuss how the GOP obviously doesn't care about their role to protect the Constitution, the Rule of Law or our institutions as long as they can distract from and muddy the waters of the Mueller investigation and protect Trump.

In the end, if Mueller's investigation, with complete transparency and due process, issues more indictments, elicits more guilty pleas, exposes more meetings with Russians and more lies under oath by the Trump administration than we already know, will the American people demand the Trump administration and his enablers in the Republican Congress be held accountable? I doubt it because people don't care. They believe the narrative: both sides are corrupt so what's the point? And without Paul Ryan and complicit Republicans willing to stand up to protect the Constitution, Russia will continue its slow-motion efforts to disrupt our government, our democracy and our values. But we don't need the Russians to tear down our democracy, the Republicans are doing it all by themselves.

Terry Weygandt

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To the Editor:

Finally, the promised infrastructure bill.

My favorite definition of infrastructure is "the basic facilities and installations that help a government or community run, including roads, schools, phone lines, sewage treatment plants and power generation." (yourdictionary.com/infrastructure)

Basically, the United States is one big community. Our schools, roads, bridges, water and sewer systems, electric grids, power generators, and communication systems do their best to hold us all together. But much of our infrastructure is

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