

O P I N I O N

Editorial...

Examining the sheep's liver

One of the main takeaways from the conclusion of Robert Mueller's "Russia investigation" is that the national media — especially the cable TV news networks — are not serving the Republic well.

For nearly two years, commentators and panels convened nightly to pick over the daily dose of "breaking news" from the Mueller investigation, acting for all the world like a coven of Roman Haruspices studying the liver of a sheep to divine the future.

And they were just about as effective.

CNN and MSNBC look particularly ridiculous at the moment. Their rooting interest in the outcome of the Mueller investigation was as transparent as the much-derided in-the-tank bias of Fox News. Having speculated endlessly and breathlessly for months and months about the potentially explosive, presidency-imperiling revelations that must surely be at hand, they were completely unprepared to deal with a damp squib, which is pretty much what they got.

MSNBC instantly lost some 500,000 viewers, who must have felt like they had been watching Geraldo Rivera uncover Al Capone's secret vault. Or, as columnist Rich Lowry notes, "it's also possible that the Mueller disappointment drove loyal viewers away in much the same way that people avoid looking at their 401(k)s when the stock market is

down."

"We don't have anything new on the Russia investigation tonight and it would be irresponsible to merely speculate; we'll get back to you when we have something substantive to report" doesn't fill the voracious maw of the 24-hour news cycle, and it probably isn't good for ratings either. Nor, apparently, is simply reporting the news. The pressures are understandable — but the ultimate result is that, despite a daily torrent of "information," we are probably less well-informed now than we were when we got our TV news from a half-hour nightly newscast.

The big push now is to insist that Attorney General Barr release the full Mueller report. And he must. We paid for it, after all; it belongs to us and we should read it for ourselves. Download it, study it, mull its implications — then head on down to your favorite Sisters watering hole and hash it over with your friends. It'll be a lot more edifying than watching Chris Cuomo or Rachel Maddow examine the pigeon entrails and pronounce upon the nature of the Emperor's destiny.



Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

If you did not get the chance to attend the BendTED X on Saturday, March 30 you missed a very inspired speech from a local student at Sisters High School. Wyatt Hernandez retold his personal story of suffering through and recovering from a concussion he received while playing football.

After a long recovery he realized the passion that he still had for playing football and

the importance of the sport in his life. It takes grit to put aside fears after a traumatic injury, and this young man came back to play again as the team's kicker. More importantly Wyatt has become much more than just a cautionary tale — he has become an advocate for recognizing the great benefits of the sport while pressing for safety advances, rule changes that

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

| Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday | Monday |
|-----------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Cloudy 55/39 | Rain 55/39 | Showers 50/36 | Showers 53/38 | AM Showers 55/38 | Showers 58/39 |

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Does our voice really matter?

By Arthur Pope

Guest Columnist

I have followed plans by the Forest Service to limit public access to three of Oregon's most popular wilderness areas for years. The Cascade Wilderness Strategies Project is intended to protect the wilderness from overuse by controlling public access.

The public comment process for this proposal has stretched over three years and for me, involved attending four meetings and submitting four lengthy comment letters. Over the years, many comments have been submitted; few supporting the implementation of a fee-based, limited-entry, permit system that will keep many of us out of our local wilderness areas.

The process has left me frustrated and wanting to lash out and vent my feelings. However, I live in Sisters. I have read too many letters and commentaries in *The Nugget* from unhappy, antagonistic, mean-spirited, people willing to attack their neighbors, stretch the facts — or make up their own. These people have taught me something valuable: I don't want to be like them. I am deeply frustrated but want to be civil, respectful and as factual as possible.

My frustration comes from a process that sucks up huge amounts of time and leads one to believe that their opinion truly matters. Realistically, one should know better. You know it isn't a vote; you know that an agency is required to collect comments but not required to act on those comments. You know sometimes this can even be a good thing. Nevertheless, it is frustrating.

The Forest Service recently released a memo detailing changes prompted by public comment. There are only three. One changes the end of the permit season by a few days; from the end of September to the last Friday in September. Another adds 11 trailheads to the list of those not requiring permits. (But still requiring a Wilderness Stewardship Fee). Lastly, a pass restricting travel between one wilderness and another has been dropped.

That's it. That's all that came out of the time, effort and energy from the dozens and dozens of dedicated

people who followed the process from day one.

The Forest Service has steadfastly refused to discuss the budget for this project or address its financial impacts on users. They say any discussion of fees can take place only after the program is implemented. What? Why? Frankly, it seems the agency is being less than forthcoming in refusing to openly address the financial impacts of this project.

The document recently released does little to dispel my frustration at this lack of openness. It references a Wilderness Stewardship Fee. This seems to indicate users will be charged two fees; a permit application fee and the newly announced Wilderness Stewardship Fee. Why? Perhaps because this second fee will assure that day hikers, hiking on trails that do not require a permit, pay for their hike as well.

Wilderness Stewardship Fee. It has a nice ring but I am afraid the Cascade Wilderness Strategies Project is more about fees than stewardship. Perhaps I am wrong. I would like to be. I would like to imagine the agency is deeply and truly concerned about and protecting wilderness values, but past actions give rise to bothersome questions.

Why did an agency concerned about protecting wilderness values push to alter natural ecosystems in the Mount Washington Wilderness by using helicopters to set fires? Why do staff allow non-native fish to be stocked in wilderness lakes to compete with endemic populations? Why does an agency promoting a pack-it-in, pack-it-out ethos leave the trash from burned-out lookouts dotting the wilderness? Why do staff allow snowmobiles to destroy the solitude of a skier's wilderness experience?

Perhaps it's simply a problem typical of any huge organization — government or otherwise. Too big. Not very nimble. Rarely open to creative thought. More, like any organization with thousands of employees, a ponderous giant; slow to evolve but friendly and doing the best it can. I understand that. I appreciate the challenges. But, I am still really frustrated!

Arthur Pope is the director of Wilderness Report

Opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.