

## Editorial...

## The antidote to cynicism

It's enough to make the most ardent patriot a cynic. Our national politics are in a constant, chaotic roil and rank hypocrisy and double standards are the coin of the realm. The worst part is that we feel helpless to affect any change, to even make our tiny voices heard through the constant braying din.

Shouting about it all on social media may provide that delicious momentary shot of dopamine, but it wears off quickly and we all know that it doesn't really accomplish anything.

So what's a good citizen to do?

Sisters has no shortage of opportunities for people who want to make a difference. A city councilor recently noted that he'd like to see more citizens show up for meetings when they don't have a dog in a particular fight. Over the next couple of months, the Sisters City Council will be taking on questions of public safety and transient merchant policy — both of which have a real and immediate impact on our quality of life right here at home.

The city council and the school board welcome input from citizens, and they pay attention. And it's pretty easy to hold our elected officials accountable when we see them in the grocery line and run into them at the coffee shop.

If politics — even of the local variety — isn't your thing, you can still make a big

difference in the life of our community. The Sisters Schools Foundation is in the midst of its annual giving campaign (*see story, page 9*). The foundation funds enrichment opportunities that are outside the scope of the regular school budget; the funds they raise have a direct, often life-changing impact on young lives. Sisters Kiwanis Club is ramping up for its holiday food drive and the food bank is always in need of assistance in providing for those in the community who need a helping hand.

This all may seem like small-ball when the whole civic fabric seems to be unraveling, but that's an illusion. What we do right here, right now, in our own communities is what keeps that civic fabric intact, even when forces beyond our control and influence seemed to be doing their damndest to tear it apart.

Building a resilient community a bit at a time, shoulder to shoulder with our neighbors, is noble work — and a whole lot better for us than impotent rage or bitter cynicism.

So if your sense of civic duty needs an outlet but you just can't take any more of the national scene, spend your energies in the local arena. We need you.



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:

Democrats must be thoroughly depressed watching their team of minions debate with promises of destroying our country and the freedoms we enjoy under the Constitution. But alas, slowly but surely emerges a diamond in the rough, Tulsi Gabbard. She is smart, articulate,

level-headed, and a veteran. She presents herself with a maturity and sane presence not seen in any of the other Democratic candidates.

And does this woman ever know how to put in words what we've needed expressed for

See **LETTERS** on page 24

## Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Sunny 61/35	Partly Cloudy 67/41	Sunny 71/33	Sunny 53/26	Sunny 50/27	Sunny 47/24

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## Wilderness fees are a kind of tax

By Art Pope  
Guest Columnist

The Deschutes and Willamette National Forests have recently released their proposal to charge the public to use three of Oregon's most popular wilderness areas. Next year you will have to apply for a permit to hike or camp in the Three Sisters, Mount Jefferson and Mount Washington wilderness areas.

The fee proposal is painfully brief. Youth under 12 will not be charged a fee but will need a permit. Day hikes will cost you a user fee of \$3 per day and overnight camping will cost you \$5 per day. In addition, [rec.gov](http://rec.gov) will charge you a service fee of \$1 per person for day hikes and \$6 per party for camping.

The proposal does not address how this money will be used or provide an analysis of how much money will be collected annually. It offers no discussion of how fee levels were determined or how much will be dedicated to administration. It fails to provide information on how our fees will be used or any assurance revenues will not be used to shift current congressionally dedicated funds to other programs or administrative overhead. Without this information any thoughtful assessment of this fee is nearly impossible.

How much will these fees cost the average wilderness user? The Forest Service proposal does not address this issue, however expect the fees you pay to be significant. Personally, I did six day hikes on the Deschutes National Forest last year. Under the new fee schedule the cost for two of us would be \$36 in user fees plus the [rec.gov](http://rec.gov) \$12 service fee. We also did four overnight trips totaling eight nights of camping. Cost for two, with the new fees; \$80 in user fees plus \$18 to [rec.gov](http://rec.gov). The total, \$146 annually. Add in the annual \$30 for a Northwest Forest Pass and you get a whopping \$1,760 in fees over the next 10 years!

User and service fees of this type are becoming increasingly common and act rather like tax assessed by a federal agency to back-fill congressional budget reductions. If you travel,

remember that other forests and national parks also charge fees and many more are working to tap into this new source of revenue.

Whether this trend is good or bad depends on your perspective. Supporting management of our federal lands through user fees is rather like the difference between public and private schools. While we all support public schools through taxes should you prefer to attend a private school, your taxes will still support public schools and you will pay an additional fee to attend a private school. Likewise, everyone's taxes support Forest Service wilderness management nationwide; however, if you want to hike in the Three Sisters Wilderness you now must pay additional fees to do so. Do you prefer many small fees, sort of like a sales tax, or one annual tax bill?

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), first passed in 2005, defines criteria for the assessment of user fees.

(b) Basis for recreation fees

Recreation fees shall be established in a manner consistent with the following criteria:

(1) The amount of the recreation fee shall be commensurate with the benefits and services provided to the visitor.

(2) The Secretary shall consider the aggregate effect of recreation fees on recreation users and recreation service providers.

(3) The Secretary shall consider comparable fees charged elsewhere and by other public agencies and by nearby private-sector operators.

(4) The Secretary shall consider the public policy or management objectives served by the recreation fee.

(5) The Secretary shall obtain input from the appropriate Recreation Resource Advisory Committee, as provided in section 6803(d) of this title.

(6) The Secretary shall consider such other factors or criteria as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

At a minimum the Forest Service should publicly demonstrate compliance with these criteria before implementing any fee-based program.

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