

## Commentary... Out on the edge

By Erik Dolson  
Columnist

One can become detached, hunkered down on a rock in the middle of nowhere, or in a boat out on the edge. It's a lifestyle with consequences, even if not consciously embraced, it's often pointed out.

But there's a perspective in that detachment, though it should not be called objective. There's no such thing. Let's get that out of the way.

Yesterday I gave up my membership in the Democratic Party and became "unaffiliated." Not Independent, and God knows, not Republican — even though I tend toward fiscally conservative.

Honestly, I'm not sure I actually walked away from the Democrats. It's more like the party left me, a shell left to dry by a tide receding from shore.

Though I disagree with much of the "progressive agenda," that wasn't what drove me away. It was the realization that I simply can't fight the condescension of true believers, and that their arrogance is going to keep them from creating the change I believe America so desperately needs.

Democrats are becoming a left-handed reflection of the true believers

that worship Trump. Just as distasteful as Donald, Jr.'s smirk as he gloats about "triggering the libs," Dems are shaking their heads at the simpletons of America who "vote against their own interests."

I won't repeat the litany describing their arrogance. It's enough to say they believe anyone who does not embrace all of their values and accept their orthodoxy without challenge is less smart, less moral, less informed, less woke, less, less, less.

Confirming their suspicions about me, I'll say to them, "How's that working for ya?" A year ago they did not win close to what they had hoped in the national election. They just lost another election in Virginia. Yet, utterly incapable of honest introspection, they blame the people they hoped to represent.

We are too stupid, too ignorant, too inbred to vote for our own good. They just can't help us if we insist on not buying what they are selling. Which includes a blend of hope mixed with accusation into a frothy view of the world unhinged from history and human nature.

And dishonesty. They blame racism for their losses, rather than the hollowness of their own message. They blame

Republican dishonesty (which certainly exists) rather than exposure of elements of their own agenda that threaten liberty. They deny that they assemble facts to fit their narrative, rather than let facts guide their words and actions.

So, yesterday I went into the county clerk's office and changed my voter registration to "unaffiliated." It's only symbolic, if I know what that even means, because I haven't really changed at all. My hopes for America haven't changed, either, but as the Democratic Party recedes deeper into divisiveness and partisanship and lies while clamoring incoherently for unity, I no longer identify with what the party has become.

Sitting on my rock in the middle of nowhere or on a boat out on the edge, I've lost a bit of optimism, along with my belief that America will always be better than she was and that our ideals will survive for another generation.

For more from Erik Dolson, visit <https://erikdolson.substack.com>.

## Volunteering for Sisters Trails Alliance

By Jim Cornelius  
Editor in Chief

Sisters trails are subject to wear and tear from heavy use and from the impacts of weather. Volunteers keep them in good shape, in work parties organized by Sisters Trails Alliance (STA).

This fall, a cadre of 21 volunteers put in 240 hours working on winter trails to the south of Sisters (*see related story, page 1*). According to STA Volunteer Coordinator Greg Vandehey, the organization has no problem finding people to lend a hand.

"I didn't have to work very hard to find volunteers, to put it plainly," he told *The Nugget*.

Many of the volunteers who brush out trails and log out deadfall trees and maintain shelters and the like are long-time residents of the Sisters area, people who use the trails and want to contribute to their maintenance. But especially over the past year, there has been an influx of newcomers eager to help out.

"Ten to 20 percent of our volunteers are new to Sisters,"

Vandehey reported. Like their veteran peers, they are motivated to maintain the trails they use — but they also find volunteering a way to meet people and integrate into the Sisters community, Vandehey said.

The work is physical, but well within the capabilities of active trail users.

"The people who come out to volunteer are people who like to hike and be out in the outdoors, so they're in pretty good physical condition," Vandehey said.

He did acknowledge that the day spent cutting firewood to stock the Jefferson Shelter was pretty demanding for everyone involved.

Volunteers who put in 16-plus hours with STA are rewarded with a Northwest Forest Pass from the U.S. Forest Service — though Vandehey said that that's just a nice perk; the incentive is the work and its results.

STA welcomes new members, but you don't have to be a member to volunteer for work parties: [www.sisterstrails.org/Volunteer](http://www.sisterstrails.org/Volunteer).



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