

Appointing Brooks AD is good move

The University scored a public-relations touchdown last week when it named head football coach Rich Brooks as the new athletic director. The decision comes in wake of the departure of Bill Byrne, who has accepted the AD position at the University of Nebraska.

The next six months should provide a good test of Brooks' ability to perform in his new dual role as athletic director/football coach. The Ducks' football team is coming off a disappointing 3-8 season and Brooks should have his hands full trying to rebuild, particularly at the chaotic quarterback position.

At the same time, he will be handed the continuing legacy of Measure 5 and the unenviable position of potentially overseeing the dismantling of much of the athletic department. The pressure to perform will be great, and Brooks had better have his playbook memorized when the budget ax starts swinging.

The selection of Brooks is advantageous to the University for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the \$68,000-per-year savings that will result in not having to pay a separate athletic director's salary. Whether the University scores the extra-point will be determined by how the savings are allocated. Conceivably, at least one position in the department could be rescued from cutbacks for at least two years (the length of Brooks' contract as athletic director).

Another positive outcome of selecting Brooks is that he is already familiar with the environment in which he and his department must operate. He knows his staff, the administration and mentality at which the state government pretends to operate. Brooks is also more likely to fight to protect the jobs of the people in his department than would be an outsider who is isolated from the staff.

The increase in job responsibilities for Brooks will most certainly result in some overflow, meaning he can't do it all. Presumably, some of this overflow will be picked up by the administration. Such a move would be in step with University President Myles Brand's desire to bring the athletic department closer to the University as a whole.

Not that the University's athletic department can be considered a maverick institution, but the perception is often that the athletic department is too isolated from the rest of the University. A greater role in athletics by the University administration can only better the image of the department, both at the University and throughout the state.

In short, if there is anyone who has the ability to do the job, it's Brooks. He deserves the full support of the University community as he tries to make the best out of a potentially bleak situation.

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The *Oregon Daily Emerald* will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

Commentaries should be between 750 and 1,000 words, legible and signed, and the identification of the writer must be verified upon submission. The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit for grammar, style and length if necessary.

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COMMENTARY

1872 law facilitates abuse of land

By Tom Ragland

In 1872, the United States Congress enacted the Mining Act of 1872. The purposes of the law were to promote mineral exploration and development of the western United States. The mining law granted free access to public lands, and upon discovery (of minerals) a patent could be issued.

Today, 220 years later, the law remains relatively intact. A patent can still be bought for either \$2.50 or \$5.00-per-acre, depending on the type of claim. A normal claim is 20 acres. While these fees were substantial in 1872, today the value of the public land far exceeds the amount paid by mining companies in patents. For example, the state of Oregon sold 780 acres of public coastline for \$1,950 to a mining company. The land was valued at \$12 million. In 1970, the General Accounting Office reviewed 20 patents. It's research showed that of 20 claims reviewed, the land was deemed to mining companies at under \$4,950; the public land was worth to the American public over \$47.9 million, this land was your land.

Another stipulation of the 1872 law is that companies and individuals must perform a hundred dollars worth of development to a claim for five years. However, there is nothing in the law that requires individuals of companies to commence mining. This allows individuals to legally steal public land, build permanent structures while paying absolutely little to the taxpayer. The Bureau of Land Management reports that there are cases of individuals building ski chalets outside of such ritzy places as Aspen, Colo.

The 1872 mining act allows for the following to take place on all publicly held claims on public land: No land reclamation, no regulation as to type of mineral extraction method, no limit as to the amounts of claims on individual or corporation can hold, there is no requirement that mineral production ever commence. The timing method and pattern of development is not regulated.

Once again, our non-sustainable economic practices based on short term gain and feeding

giant industry until there is no more food, has resulted in environmental degradation. The powerful mining industry has successfully lobbied against any environmental regulation. The BLM, under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act controls what public land can be sold for mineral exploration and what can be withdrawn from mineral exploration.

Nearly two-thirds of all land withdrawn from mineral exploration were withdrawn for the following reasons: infrastructure improvements, military reservations, Federal oil reserves and power sites. The National Wildlife Federation challenged this policy in the Supreme Court case *Lugan vs. National Wildlife Federation*. Not surprisingly, the NWF lost.

Taking advantage of little environmental regulation, the mining industry has begun to use cyanide in its never ending quest to supply the world with gold. Cyanide is used in a process called cyanide heap leach mining. This insidious process is extremely cost-effective. Not uncommonly, extremely cost-effective processes in the mining industry mean environmental degradation. Cyanide pits litter the American West and are the most prevalent in Nevada. So far, we have been able to stop cyanide mining in Oregon. The Atlas Company of Denver has proposed a cyanide mine in Southeastern Oregon at Grassy Mountain.

The biological effects of cyanide mining are many. Cyanide pits are, on the average, 1,200 feet deep and 2,000 feet across. Roughly, 50 Empire State Buildings could fit into one pit. Mining companies by law do not have to reclaim the pits.

For every 100 tons of earth scraped from the mountains and valleys, the yield is a half-teaspoon of gold. It costs the company about \$200 dollars to get an ounce of gold, but fair market value for an ounce of gold is around \$800, so as you can see, it is entirely cost effective.

Another problem associated with the dreadful cyanide practice is the amount of water used on a daily basis. On the average, a cyanide mine uses 1,000 to 1,500 gallons of water per minute. The stealing of water from the desert and wildlife

causes massive damage to this fragile ecosystem. Bighorn sheep, coyotes, foxes, countless birds and flora and fauna are robbed of their precious water supply. These animals are forced to unknowingly drink the poisonous water supply, because all that is left is this toxic laden, instant death drink. The mining industry is lobbying hard to not be required to cover these cyanide ponds.

Once the earth is scraped from our public land, it is put on polyethylene liners to be sprayed. Much of the cyanide runs off into the groundwater and streams of the American West, poisoning water supplies and killing aquatic habitat. The present "state-of-the-art" liners are unable to prevent 75 percent of the cyanide from running off.

Cyanide spills are common. A typical cyanide mine uses 3 million pounds of cyanide per year. The state of Nevada reports two spills-per-week. In South Carolina, a mine spilled 9 million gallons of cyanide into a nearby river. The Exxon Valdez spill was ten million gallons.

So what can we do? First of all, boycott gold. If the demand for gold drops it will be no longer cost-effective to mine it. Sixty percent of all gold mining is done for jewelry. A boycott would be extremely effective. Placing pressure on your congressman and/or senator will only result in greater regulation, which is needed, but it will probably result in companies moving to Mexico to pollute their deserts. After all, many mining companies in the United States are form overseas and Canada. They come here to take advantage of the 1872 law and there is no reason why they would not move elsewhere. We need to close down their operation, not get them to move on.

What else can you do? Spread the word about the boycott, print flyers, write articles, tell your parents, etc. To stop this practice of cyanide mining will take many methods, this is not just a boycott or a letter writing campaign. A variety of methods at all levels of activity is the only way to stop this destruction.

Tom Ragland is a resident of Eugene.