



## On the Fence

*Climate change: We must create rural resilience as we face rough roads ahead*

As I contemplated the recent summer burn bans, I worried that perhaps my children will never remember a summer night of roasted marshmallows over a roaring campfire.

Maybe instead, with watery eyes and burning lungs, they'll find ashes, raining like snow from a burned orange sky, commonplace. Will phrases like "decreased snowpack" and "water scarcity" echo continuously in the world we create for ourselves and leave for our little ones?

Research by the American Meteorological Society has shown that we're already seeing crop and livestock losses due to drought, fire and flooding; shifts in planting and harvests; and wide-scale weather and storm damage to land and roads. Rural areas, like Union County, are particularly vulnerable to global climate volatility due to physical isolation, lack of economic diversity, an aging population and high levels of poverty.

The National Climate Assessment's "Rural Communities" research points out that sectors such as agriculture face disproportionate vulnerability, and changes can place a huge tension on community stability.

Our current leadership seems to brush this thought under the rug as we brace ourselves for the next crisis — flood, wildfire, drought, whatever may come. Our congressional representatives overwhelmingly respond to the climate call with half-baked ideas about forest thinning and moving funds from one allocation to another. Although these ideas have their merits in theory, they are merely applying a bandage to an already hemorrhaging wound.

Meanwhile, elected officials think we rural Oregonians are simple-minded enough to accept the short-term employment benefit of further oil exploration and coal-fired power plants on the national scale.

They are shaking our hands while turning their back on us. I wish I could say that motives for coal and oil development by Congress were actually to stimulate job creation, but the truth is they have been bought. Dollar signs cloud their vision as they gallivant from one big donor meeting to the next — all the while wildfire smoke clouds ours. At some point, we have to ask ourselves, "Who are they really listening to?"

Destroying the few valuable resources remaining while the threat of a greater



**ANNA MORGAN-HAYES**  
UNION COUNTY  
PROGRESSIVES/DEMOCRATS

issue literally stifles the air we breathe is an insult to our intelligence and way of life. We need only look to the rural communities of Appalachia and the lessons they learned from a century of coal mining: long-term illness, water contamination, community upheaval, economic depression and, last, joblessness and uncertain access to health care. We have seen these economic collapses in other industries too.

Just as a beating heart needs fresh blood to keep pumping, our economy needs a fresh supply of diverse industries to sustain itself.

Instead of investing in antiquated and economically unviable, non-renewable industries like coal, we need to diversify our economy to create resilience as we face rough roads ahead.

The best investment we can make is in initiatives that enable our community to sustain itself: to support our food systems, protect our resources and stand up to billionaires who are trying to take it all away. Not only is it in our best environmental interest — it is in the interest of the longevity of our economy, health and rural way of life.

If the goal is to work hard and give your kids the very best, it is your moral imperative to make decisions that allow your children to thrive.

The most important and lasting gift you can bestow upon them will be the gift of clean water, clean air and the ability to be resilient.

Voting in the November 2018 election is the best way rural Oregonians can protect our health and environment, which we pass down to our children. If we work together to elect representatives who are not in the pocket of big gas and oil, we can protect ourselves before it's too late.

*Anna Morgan-Hayes is a La Grande resident, wife, mother of three Master of Natural Resources, Oregon State University, Emphasis: Water Conflict Management and Transformations B.S. Environmental Studies, University of Oregon, Emphasis: Sustainable Design, Policy, Planning, and Public Management*

*Climate change: Response requires community involvement*

Bob Dylan's 1964 hit song says, "The times they are a-changin'." As times have changed, so has the world's climate, and it is time that Americans prepare for its worst effects.

The East Coast is already grappling with more intense hurricanes, while the Pacific Northwest has endured lengthier fire seasons. America's defense institutions are increasingly answering the call to provide relief to areas affected by climate change, while at home we must take action in our communities to adapt to changing climates.

In 2015, the Department of Defense delivered a report to Congress entitled "National Security Implications of Climate-related Risks and a Changing Climate" that detailed the challenges America's national security agencies are facing as a result of climate change. Flooding in Pakistan in 2010 required the Department of Defense to deliver humanitarian aid to remote regions, while 24,000 DOD personnel were deployed in New Jersey and New York in the wake of Hurricane Sandy to offer direct and secondary support. This report concludes that, "The Department of Defense sees climate change as a present security threat, not strictly a long-term risk," which affects "vulnerable nations and communities, including in the United States."

In Union County, we have all watched the summer skies grow hazier over the years, and if the Defense Department is to be believed, climate change will only worsen the disasters we experience in rural Oregon.

Early August saw an air quality level of 111 in Cove at a time when La Grande experienced record high temperatures. The air quality rating at Shady Cove School outside of Medford reached 344 over the summer. Poor air quality forced Ashland's acclaimed Shakespeare Festival to cancel or move 19 performances this summer — down from 20 in 2017. With a fire season that has grown from 23 days in



**ALEX MCHADDAD**  
UNION COUNTY REPUBLICANS

the 1970s to 116 by the 2000s, we can only expect poorer air quality, more widespread property damage and the loss of precious human lives going forward.

While few of us possess the capability to deliver humanitarian aid to remote villages in South Asia or even venture to North Carolina to assist the victims of Hurricane Florence, each of us can do our part by supporting the brave emergency responders on the front lines of the climate crisis in Union County.

Rural La Grande, Elgin, Union and Imbler are all served by volunteer rural fire protection districts that could use additional support from people participating in their governing board meetings, dining at fundraisers such as the Elgin Firemen's Breakfast and volunteering as firefighters when the need arises.

Citizens can push their cities and counties to adopt official contingency plans for dealing with fires, such as a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, or serve on bodies such as the Air Quality Commission in La Grande, which currently has no members.

As we face the looming specter of unpredictable weather and more drastic fire seasons, we need to remember that we are not helpless victims of climate change. Fighting back is no insurmountable goal when we work together for the good of our neighbors.

*Alex is the former chair of the Eastern Oregon University College Republicans. A graduate of EOU and College of the Canyons in Valencia, California, he is a veteran of multiple local, state, and national campaigns, including Bud Pierce for Oregon Governor, and Jeb Bush and Marco Rubio for President.*

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. Letters are limited to 350 words and must be signed and carry the author's address and phone number (for verification purposes only). We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We do not fact check. We will not publish poetry,

consumer complaints against businesses or personal attacks against private individuals. Thank-you letters are discouraged. Letter writers are limited to one letter every two weeks. Email your letters to news@lagrandeobserver.com or mail them to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande, Ore., 97850.

### SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

#### SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

NEWSSTAND PRICE: \$1.50

You can save up to 34% off the single-copy price with home delivery.

Call **541-963-3161** to subscribe.

Stopped account balances less than \$5 will be refunded upon request.

#### Subscription rates per month:

By carrier..... \$10.50

By mail, all other U.S. .... \$15

## THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896

(USPS 299-260)

The Observer reserves the right to adjust subscription rates by giving prepaid and mail subscribers 30 days notice. Periodicals postage paid at La Grande, Oregon 97850. Published Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (except Dec. 25) by Western Communications Inc., 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

COPYRIGHT © 2018 THE OBSERVER  
The Observer retains ownership and copyright protection of all staff-prepared news copy, advertising copy, photos and news or ad illustrations. They may not be reproduced without explicit prior approval.

Phone: **541-963-3161**

Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-422-3110

Fax: 541-963-7804

Email: news@agrandeobserver.com

Website: www.lagrandeobserver.com

Street address: 1406 Fifth St., La Grande

### POSTMASTER

Send address changes to: The Observer, 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850  
Periodicals postage paid at La Grande, Oregon 97850

### STAFF

Regional publisher.....	Karrine Brogotti	Home delivery advisor.....	Amanda Fredrick
General manager/ Regional operations manager .....	Frank Everidge	Customer service rep .....	Mollie Lynch
Regional audience development director.....	Kelli Craft	Advertising representative .....	Karen Fye
Editor.....	Cherise Kaechele	Advertising representative.....	Juli Bloodgood
News clerk.....	Lisa Lester Kelly	Advertising representative.....	Amy Horn
Sports editor .....	Ronald Bond	Graphic design supervisor.....	Dorothy Kautz
Reporter.....	Dick Mason	Graphic design.....	Cheryl Christian
Reporter.....	Audrey Love	Lead pressman.....	Chris Dunn
Reporter.....	Max Denning	Pressman.....	Jay Magnuson
Classifieds.....	Devi Mathson	Distribution center supervisor.....	Larra Cutler
Customer service rep .....	Sharon Magnuson	Distribution center.....	Terry Everidge



A division of  
Western Communications Inc.