

GUEST EDITORIAL FROM THE ALBANY DEMOCRAT-HERALD

Report shows sluggish rates

A recent report from the state Department of Environmental Quality about Oregon's goals for recycling included bad news: The state is likely to fall short of its goals for recycling more than half of the waste generated in the state.

For calendar year 2017, the state found, Oregonians recovered or recycled a little more than 2.3 million tons of waste. That works out to be about 42.8 percent of the roughly 5.4 million tons of waste generated in the state.

The problem is that the state's Legislature has set a goal of 52 percent recovery by 2020. (The goal for 2025 is 55 percent.)

Officials told the Statesman-Journal newspaper, which reported about the survey, that the 2020 goal now seems out of reach. (A copy of the state report is attached to the online version of this editorial.)

Looking at the trends, it certainly appears as if Oregon is moving in the wrong direction: The recovery rate for the state peaked at 49.7 percent in 2012 and has been sliding since then.

To be fair, the 2017 rate of 42.8 percent was a little better than the 2016 rate, 42.2 percent. And that 42.8 percent rate for 2017 represents about 2.3 million tons of recovered material. That's all stuff that doesn't need to be dumped at a landfill.

And the state report noted some unexpected developments that depressed the state rate. If you've been following developments in the world of recycling, you know about one of them: China's decision near the end of 2017 to ban imports of unsorted paper and post-consumer plastics.

But a bigger factor, the state said, was the unexpected 2015 closure of a paper mill in Newberg that was the state's largest user of post-consumer wood waste as a fuel. Other mills stopped using wood waste because of federal air-quality rules, a state official told the Statesman-Journal.

That suggests one important lesson about recycling: Even the best intentions don't matter much unless there are markets for that recycled material.

If you need more evidence about the connection between markets and recycling, consider what happened with bottles and cans in 2017: In April of that year, the deposit for those containers doubled, from 5 to 10 cents. Not unexpectedly, 2017 saw a substantial increase in the recycling of those containers.

Here's another example: Scrap metal prices increased in 2017, and so did the amount of metals recovered, which jumped by some 14 percent.

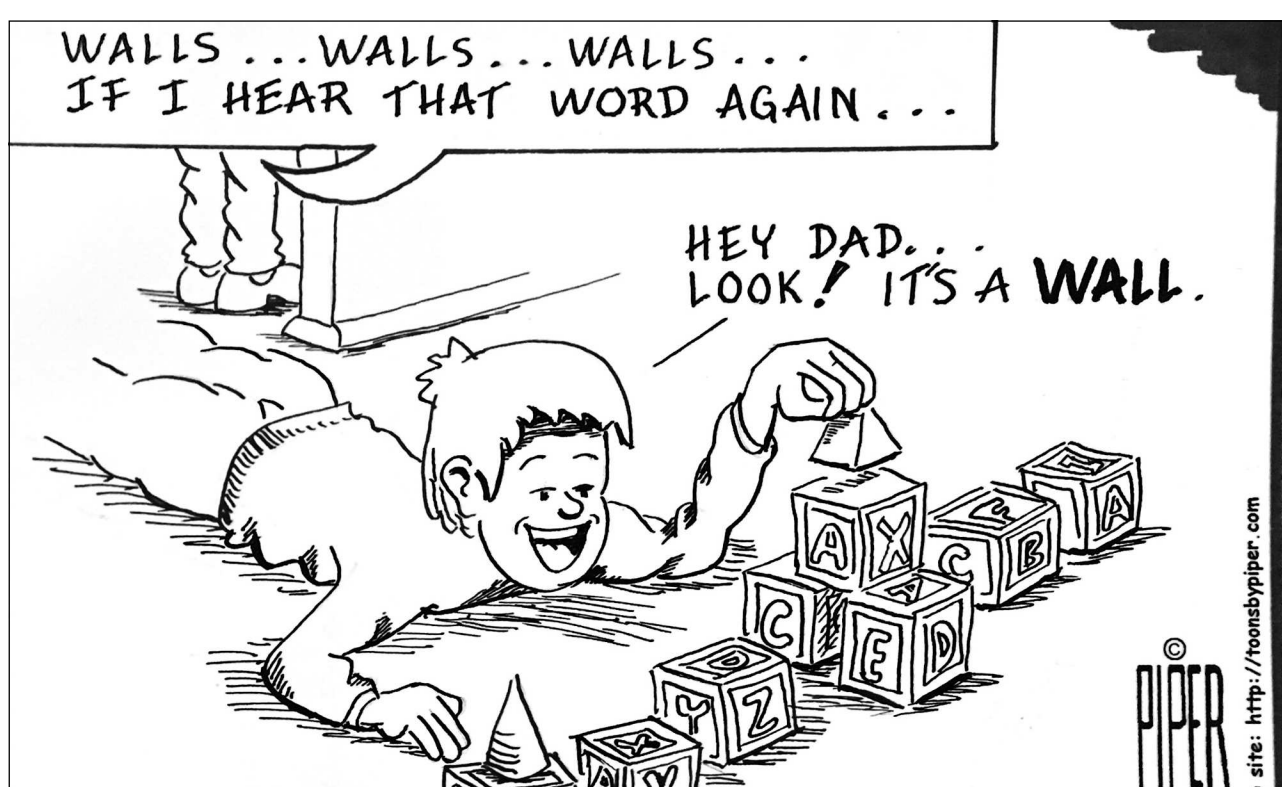
Another hopeful trend involves manufacturers using lightweight packaging instead of heavier materials. The upside, the state said, is that the lighter materials tend to be easier on the environment. The downside is that increasing use of these materials could depress the state's recovery rate, which is based on weight.

The state report contains a wealth of additional information, and some of it is surprising.

The report breaks the state into 35 separate "wastesheds," which Oregon law defines as an area that shares a common solid waste disposal system. Even though they don't exactly correspond to county lines, it's still interesting to take a look at the 2017 numbers for the Benton and Linn wastesheds.

To be fair, only six wastesheds currently are running ahead of that 2025 goal. The best mark in the state, 52.8 percent, came in Lane County, but that county still trails its 2025 goal of 63 percent.

Hitting the state's ambitious goals will require the development of robust (and stable) markets for recycled material. But here's one more number to think about: Maybe we all could do something to reduce that 5 million tons of stuff we throw away every year.



A new face to introduce at The Observer

Hello, readers!
My name is Amanda Weisbrod and I'm the newest reporter at The Observer.



FROM THE NEWSROOM
AMANDA WEISBROD

I come to you from my hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio, which is approximately 2,100 miles from my new home in La Grande. I accepted a position at The Observer in November, graduated from Ohio University with a bachelor's degree in journalism in December, and moved cross-country with my cat, Darko, at the beginning of January. It's been a crazy couple of months.

In college, I wrote articles, designed pages and edited content for a number of student publications including The Post, Ohio University's flagship newspaper, Backdrop, a local

arts and culture magazine, Speakeasy, an online entertainment magazine, and Southeast Ohio, a local news and lifestyle magazine. My most valuable experiences, however, come from my editorial internships at Cincinnati magazine, The Athens Messenger newspaper, CityBeat Cincinnati and OnTap magazine in Washington, D.C.

While at The Observer, I will be responsible for covering the City of Elgin, arts and entertainment, the Center for Human Development and Grande Ronde Hospital as well as designing

pages one and five. If you have any story leads or need to get in touch, feel free to send an email to aweisbrod@lagrandeobserver.com or give me a call at 541-963-3161.

I chose La Grande and the greater area of Northeast Oregon as my first home after graduation because I was looking for an adventure. Ohio will always be my home base, but I have lived there my entire life and I wanted some fresh scenery. Oregon sounded beautiful to me. On the drive from Boise Airport to La Grande, I was pleased to find out I was right.

I have never seen mountains like yours. Every morning on my drive to the newsroom, I take a moment to appreciate the breathtak-

ing sunrise over the peaks. I can't wait to explore them in the summer.

Other Oregonian things I learned over this past week include: rodeos are a big deal out here, attendants will pump your gas for you, and purchasing a pair of cowboy boots will be enough to disguise your Midwestern-ness — at least for a little while.

I've already met a number of incredibly genuine and pleasant people in La Grande and the surrounding area, which has been very comforting as I'm a long way from everyone and everything I know. I'm eager to learn even more about your cities and state, all while meeting some wonderful people in the process. See you around!

Report outlines harassment at Legislature

By Mike McNally
Albany Democrat-Herald

The state of Oregon's new labor commissioner, Val Hoyle, was sworn into office on Monday. She said her first order of business will be to review a scathing report from her agency detailing how sexual harassment made the Legislature a hostile workplace.

Hoyle has said she wants to talk with the investigators who prepared the report, which was put in motion when her predecessor, Brad Avakian, filed a complaint on behalf of four women who said they had been harassed in the Capitol. (As the complainant in the case, Avakian played no role in the investigation.)

It will be up to Hoyle to decide what sanctions, if any, to impose on the Legislature. Among Avakian's suggestions, according to a story from Oregon Public Broadcasting: Paying a year's tuition for two student interns who were harassed by former Sen. Jeff Kruse and setting up a \$15 million fund to potentially pay other victims.

It's good for Hoyle to take a little bit of time to ponder her next move as she settles in as the head of the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

And legislative leaders and state officials could use the extra time to sort through the report and to assess their own efforts to deal with sexual harassment. If the report is accurate, those efforts thus far have been, to put this

charitably, insufficient at best.

If you need a template for how sexual harassment endures (and can even thrive) in workplaces, you could do a lot worse than studying the picture of the Capitol painted by the BOLI report. (A copy of the report is attached to the online version of this editorial.)

Among the conclusions in the report:

- Legislative leaders knew, or should have known by 2015 at the latest, about numerous allegations of sexual harassment in the Capitol. Many of those allegations involved behavior by Kruse, who resigned after an investigation that was prompted in part by formal complaints filed by Sens. Sara Gelser of Corvallis and Elizabeth Steiner Hayward.

- Legislative leaders failed to deal with the complaints in a timely or effective manner. (In fact, the report notes in an aside, leaders "took more serious steps to curb former Senator Kruse's smoking (in the Capitol) than they did to curb his sexual harassment.")

- People reporting issues "were told not to speak about their complaints and some were warned about the possibility of defamation or retaliation claims for doing so. ... The record indicates that people have a fear of retaliation for coming forward."

The report went into considerable detail about how legislative leaders

dealt with Gelser and her complaint, and, again, the responses are sadly common for women reporting sexual harassment. House Speaker Tina Kotek, for example, told Gelser that it would be difficult for her to publicly call for Kruse's resignation because other lawmakers considered Gelser "unlikable."

"And that is something that I have heard a lot from leadership," Gelser told investigators from the bureau, "that I am unlikable, that I'm disliked, that I'm unfriendly, grandstanding, media hungry." (Kotek has since said that she regrets how she delivered that message: "I deeply regret that I hurt Senator Gelser or made her feel less supported. I wish I had done a better job articulating the dynamics that I thought she needed to be aware of.") Kotek, who noted that the Legislature is in the midst of upgrading its rules regarding sexual harassment, also has said that her initial reaction to the bureau's report was one of "disappointment and frustration.")

Judging by the report, however, a number of women in addition to Gelser feel disappointed and frustrated by the way their concerns have been handled by the Legislature. Legislative leaders undoubtedly hope that the rules upgrade Kotek mentioned will make a difference. But it also appears as if attitudes about harassment in the Capitol need some serious adjustment.

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