



## On the Fence

### How will climate change affect Eastern Oregon?

Climate change is here: It's time to talk about adaptation

Last week, I attended a meeting in Enterprise with range specialists, ranchers and Joseph Band Nez Perce people from the Colville reservation. The topic? Tracking and managing the precariousness that climate change is bringing to our local rangelands.

Summers in Oregon are trending hotter and drier. When temperatures are high, the window of abundant high-protein green forage is shorter. Poor summer forage means thinner animals and fewer and weaker calves. This is true for wildlife too, retired ODFW biologist Mike Hansen told me, in a different meeting. Dry grass is "basically soda crackers" for grazers, he said. Mike's research on the Sled Springs elk herd has shown that poor calf recruitment is tied to high summer temperatures more than to any other factor. More heat means drier plants means fewer babies. You don't get much more straightforward than that.

These are only two of the meetings I've attended recently about climate change in our region. And a decline in rangeland forage quality is only one of the ways that global warming is already impacting Eastern Oregon. Every local land manager and scientist I've spoken with in the last six months (and I've spoken with dozens) is concerned about climate change.

Temperatures in Oregon have risen 2 degrees Fahrenheit in the last century and will continue to rise. The Forest Service, having reviewed regional projections, expects temperatures in the Blue Mountains to rise an additional 4.5 to 6.5 degrees over the next three decades. For every degree of temperature increase, the snow line climbs about 300 feet.

Less snow means longer fire seasons, spring floods, creeks gone dry sooner in the summer, and severe impacts on water availability for agriculture. People who pay close attention to the land are already seeing these effects. Our streams and reservoirs are already sometimes warm enough to kill salmon, which is one reason local tribes are deeply engaged in climate adaptation planning. Drought- and heat-tolerant insects and weeds are changing the composition of our forests and grasslands.

Exactly how much hotter it will get



**CHRISTINA DEVILLIER**  
UNION COUNTY  
PROGRESSIVES/DEMOCRATS

depends on whether or not we muster the will to curtail, globally, our fossil fuel addiction. How much worse it will get depends, at least in part, on how we manage our resources locally.

In Northeast Oregon, adaptation requires protecting our headwaters and riparian areas and using water more thoughtfully. Domestic water efficiency can be improved with rainwater capture and consumption choices. Changing which crops we grow and where, and changing stocking levels and herd characteristics, can help farmers and ranchers manage climate risk.

On our public lands, restoration efforts (coupled with better monitoring in a time of rapid change) can help us to proactively support the hydrologic function of floodplains and soils. We also have an amazing opportunity, here in Northeast Oregon, to help solve the climate crisis. The easiest, most affordable climate solutions are "technologies" that nature has already developed. Trees and soils store carbon, so when we protect forests and grasslands, or lengthen the interval between disturbances like logging and tilling, we're protecting giant structures that pull heat-trapping pollutants out of the air for us, for free. Nature is our best buffer against local climate instability too: Forests and wetlands provide clean water and temper climate extremes in both winter and summer. A connected network of wildlands is also our best bet for ensuring that our non-human neighbors can move in response to climate-related changes in their habitats.

A record seven in 10 Americans (including, increasingly, conservatives) now say they're worried about climate change. It's time for politicians to step up before we're out of time. Only nations and the international community can make changes at the scale (global) and in the time frame (one decade) that we need. But we're not helpless at the local level. Already, in Northeast Oregon, our land managers, land lovers and landscapes are figuring out, in a time of rapid change, how to adapt. ■

Gov't attempts to combat climate change will eliminate middle class

The new carbon pricing policy that is being proposed by the current Oregon legislative session is aimed at regulating greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to combat the effects of climate change. It is a noble endeavor to try to protect and secure a safe environment for the generations that will come after us.

The Oregon Legislature proposes carbon credits and taxes that will disproportionately affect the rural communities in Oregon, which are, to a more extensive degree, reliant on carbon to make a living, and because of longer commutes, we will be disproportionately punished by these proposed taxes. When taken out to its logical conclusion, the state government intends to lift monies out of the rural economies and shift them into the city environments.

Part of the proposed carbon credit system also entails a new agency to manage new cap-and-trade policies. This would amount to multiple new "jobs" that would be paid for by the new cap-and-trade legislation (jobs that are created by new taxes are only a burden on an already beleaguered system). The state government, in essence, is taking more money from the tattered middle class in Oregon. (When the middle class is squeezed to the point that it is forced to shrink, it inevitably will cease to exist. The middle class was created by our Constitutional Republican form of government.) If we allow the government to use fear-based legislation to eliminate the middle class, we will become subjects of the system.

The legislators who are putting forth these policies probably do not believe they are destroying Oregon. Quite the opposite. They believe they are trying to save it. But the result will be the same — the destruction of the middle class and the freedom that we claim to hold dear. The proposed legislation has half of all the funds received for the new taxes earmarked to go to low-income people in rural communities who will be hardest impacted by the rise in fuel costs and other price increases. Remember, the middle class will take the greatest increase in cost, i.e., small businesses and farms.



**JOSHUA RIDLEY**  
UNION COUNTY  
REPUBLICANS

The government will then redistribute half the monies received to the most vulnerable. This brings median wage earners down and low wage earners up. At the same time, everybody goes down the ladder in regards to how far their income will provide for them. The new legislation will, in essence, bring us many steps closer to a socialist society in Oregon (Google "Overton window").

Carbon Engineering, in British Columbia, Canada, has built a carbon collecting facility that removes carbon directly from the atmosphere. This carbon then can be processed back into fuel, which is cleaner and more efficient, basically recycling the gas we use. One of these plants is equivalent to cleaning the pollution created by 250,000 vehicles annually.

The plants clean up our carbon, create reusable fuels and create jobs. It does everything the Oregon Legislature claims to be concerned about. Why can't we take a lesson from American history and be at the forefront of innovation?

It is my honest belief that this legislation will be an extreme detriment to our communities across the state with an unfair burden being put on rural communities. The cities will have the most to gain, and the government will grow to into a worse burden than it already is.

I implore you who read this letter, please don't allow this to happen to our state. I've proposed a better way that would create jobs and not only stop our carbon footprint but clean the environment — which we do indeed care for.

If our government is allowed to continue imposing its will on us unchecked, we will go the road not just of California but of far worse places. Our children will bear the burden of this government gone wild. I've lived in this community for 35 years. I served our country, and I'm involved. Please join me in taking back our state for "We the People." ■

**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.....\$11.80  
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 © 2019 THE OBSERVER**  
The Observer retains ownership and copyright protection of all staff-prepared news copy, advertising copy, photos and news or 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@lagrandeobserver.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
Regional circulation director.....Kelli Craft	Customer service rep.....Mollie Lynch
News clerk.....Lisa Lester Kelly	Advertising representative.....Karen Fye
Sports editor.....Ronald Bond	Advertising representative.....Juli Bloodgood
Reporter.....Dick Mason	Advertising representative.....Amy Horn
Reporter.....Francisca Benitez	Graphic design supervisor.....Dorothy Kautz
Reporter.....Amanda Weisbrod	Graphic design.....Cheryl Christian
Classifieds.....Devi Matthson	
Customer service rep.....Sharon Magnuson	



A division of  
Western Communications Inc.