

From the editor

Readers more vital than ever to reporting

Change is a constant, and newsrooms are not immune to it. Our latest reporter, Kaleb Lay, departs to finish his college degree. We have a multimedia journalist who starts next week. That position came about with the departure of former sports editor Ronald Bond taking the editor position at the Wallowa County Chieftain. The multimedia journalist

will benefit not just The Observer but also our related EO Media Group news-



PHIL WRIGHT
OBSERVER EDITOR

papers in Eastern Oregon. And we're working to fill the vacancy that Lay's departure creates.

For you, readers, that could mean seeing more state or national news on the front page for a couple weeks. I've not been keen on doing that often because I want to reserve the front page for as much local news as possible.

Some readers, however, have clamored for more national news on the front. This job isn't about pleasing everybody.

As we bring on new reporters and get them going, I will continue to push The Observer newsroom to focus more on issues. I remain keen on an issues-based approach to local reporting. The pandemic derailed that effort as much as it helped it because the pandemic has become the issue touching on every part of our lives. (Perhaps greater than we realize. NPR on Friday morning, Feb. 5, reported a new mathematical calculation out of Columbia University shows the true number of active cases — the people still infectious — is 10 times the number that show up in daily case reports.)

But much more remains to pursue. Homelessness and housing — or the lack of housing — are crucial to cover. We have not even scratched the surface on local government spending. U.S. Census data can provide a valuable pool of information. And we need to continue to rely on public records and push for public records for news stories.

Yes, city council meetings and school board meetings and county commissioner meetings can be important, and some readers have wanted us to spend more time covering them. But I'm not convinced that detailing the minutiae of these meetings is the best use of a newsroom's time, especially in an operation as small as ours.

A good meeting precede, however, can be beneficial. Making moves to do more to let people know why a meeting matters is better than telling them only the decisions made by a local government body.

Figuring out what issues matter to the community is more difficult because of the virus. Back when 2020 looked to be no more unusual than usual for an election year, the newspaper planned to have a meeting with select readers. We also talked of an open house after moving into the building at 911 Jefferson Ave., just a couple blocks from downtown La Grande. Both would have been good ways to gain feedback. Both have yet to happen, of course.

So beyond letters to the editor, we need you, readers, more than ever, to send us your suggestions, story ideas and to let us know the issues you consider important.

Do keep the letters coming as well. But please, don't just drop one off or send one in the mail without a phone number. We need to be able to verify letters.

I have some sitting right now on my desk that we won't run without being able to verify them.



Other Views

Reducing emissions isn't enough



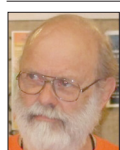
RAY SEIDLER
CULTIVATE OREGON

Oregonians living through the September 2020 fires know the threat global warming poses; we are on the front lines. We know temperature is rising and rainfall is declining during summer, while snowpack is declining during winter. We know our soils and vegetation are drying through summer and increasing fire risk because we constantly live with that risk.

Climate changes impact what grows in our forests, what and how we grow our food, and how we recreate. The cost of weather-related disasters in the United States in 2020, including three devastating hurricanes, extreme wildfires, hail, flooding, tornadoes and drought, reached \$306 billion. We also understand that increasing atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations resulting from our behavior will make unchecked global warming worse.

Fortunately, we can control the trend by adjusting our behavior. Summarizing current climate science, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicates that limiting global warming and its climate change consequences to manageable proportions requires keeping the temperature increase under 3 degrees Fahrenheit above preindustrial revolution (1700s) conditions. The IPCC also tells us persuasively that reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 is inadequate.

The IPCC and the U.S. National Academy of Sciences argue that achieving climate mitigation and eco-



ALAN JOURNET
SOCAN

nomie growth requires both reducing greenhouse gas emissions and capturing and storing more carbon dioxide using negative emission technologies (NETs). Thus, we must promote NETs.

The 2020 Oregon Global Warming Commission Biennial Report concluded Oregon is not meeting emissions reduction targets established by our Oregon Legislature in 2007. Possibly because the program is purely voluntary, polluters have not reduced emissions sufficiently.

Meanwhile, attempts to legislate climate action have been repeatedly thwarted by many representatives either resisting state action or simply walking out of the legislative chambers to defeat it. Consequently, in March 2020, Gov. Kate Brown signed Executive Order 20-04 (the Oregon Climate Action Plan, OCAP) charging state agencies with reducing emissions and providing a route for Oregon to join global efforts to address climate change.

Although it doesn't target net zero greenhouse gas emissions, the executive order seeks emissions reductions of at least 80% below 1990 levels by 2050 and recognizes the IPCC emphasis on carbon sequestration by requiring that Oregon's Forestry and Agriculture agencies promote carbon sequestration by rural land managers. To encourage our neighbors to adopt carbon sequestration practices, financial incentives are necessary. Unfortunately, because the governor has no

authority to raise revenue, the OCAP lacks revenue to fund incentives.

The basic mechanism the Department of Environmental Quality is developing for reducing emissions from industries and power plants involves issuing to these emitters, then annually reducing, a number of compliance instruments (allowances). There is, however, an opportunity within this proposal to provide a funding stream to incentivize carbon sequestration. This opportunity involves alternative compliance instruments — ACIs or "offsets."

Rural and coastal Oregonians are on the front lines of global warming and also economically depressed. By providing polluters with an opportunity to invest in rural and coastal forests and farming communities through subsidies for carbon sequestration, we can serve the global atmospheric carbon dioxide reduction need and stimulate depressed economies.

It is critical to note, however, that use of ACIs must be subjected to regulations that prevent emitters from substituting ACIs for emissions reductions when the latter are possible, and that protect frontline communities from the environmental injustices to which they have been subjected for years.

To support the inclusion of alternative compliance instruments, email DEQ at GHGCR2021@deq.state.or.us and the Oregon Global Warming Commission at Oregon.GWC@Oregon.gov.

Ray Seidler is a steering committee member of Cultivate Oregon, www.cultivateoregon.org. Alan Journet is co-facilitator of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now, socan.eco.

Letters

We have bigger concerns than just coronavirus

Coronavirus is not our gravest health concern.

Research out of the journal of Health Policy and Planning (vol. 34, issue 6) presents compelling data reminding us that even in the midst of a global pandemic, we face sustained and unrelenting global health challenges. While the impact of COVID-19 has been far-reaching and what

many might call devastating, it is not unique in this regard.

The data and predictive models used by these researchers shows that upward of 595,379 childhood deaths each year can be attributed to not breastfeeding, according to the global recommendations from World Health Organization and UNICEF.

They also estimate that "974,956 cases of childhood obesity can be attributed to not breast-

feeding according to recommendations each year. For women, breastfeeding is estimated to have the potential to prevent 98,243 deaths from breast and ovarian cancers as well as type II diabetes each year."

They go on to explain, "The Lancet Series on Breastfeeding estimated that (more than) 800,000 child deaths globally and cognitive losses totaling US \$302 billion per year were attributable to not breastfeeding."

Coronavirus is a real and serious concern, but for those of us promoting the WHO/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations and supporting national and global policy for the sake of saving "just one life," we might ought to consider what other changes we could make in pursuit of that goal.

We could start by thinking about how we feed our children.

*Rebecca Patton
Enterprise*

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