

Other Views

National forests, BLM lands should be off-limits to logging

The Biden administration supports protecting 30% of U.S. lands by 2030, or what is termed the “30-by-30 proposal.” One of the best ways to meet those 30-by-30 goals would be to put all national forests and BLM lands off-limits to logging.

Not only does this help to move the country closer to the 30-by-30 goals, but it would go a long way toward sequestering carbon as well.



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ECOLOGIST

Our public forests currently hold about seven times the current annual national carbon

emissions and U.S. forests sequester about 12% of the country’s carbon emissions.

If we stopped logging and thinning our federal forests, we could sequester even more carbon.

However, the U.S. Forest Service, the timber industry and co-opted conservation groups continue to support thinning the forest in the name of precluding large wildfires.

Unfortunately, advocates of thinning mislead Americans on the limited effectiveness of thinning in precluding large blazes. Plus, logging contributes more carbon to the atmosphere that exacerbates fire weather.

The problem with the “thinning will limit large fires” myth is that it ignores the influence of extreme fire weather. Thinning might, in some instances, slow or stop blazes burning under low to moderate fire conditions, but not under extreme fire weather. Under less than extreme weather, most fires are easily suppressed or even self-extinguish if we leave them alone.

All large fires are driven by extreme weather. And these are the fires that the agency, politicians and others seek to stop, but under such conditions, the scientific consensus is that nothing can stop a blaze. Wind-driven fires pass over, around, and through thinned forests and prescribed burning sites.

Despite being some of the heaviest logged and thinned forests in Oregon, fires burning under extreme fire weather conditions charred hundreds of thousands of acres of the Western Cascades.

Even if logging/thinning worked to slow a blaze’s advance, there is an extremely low likelihood (less than 1%) that any treated forests will be exposed to fire. So most thinning projects remove carbon, but they do nothing to reduce large blazes.

As one study concluded: “The amount of carbon removed to change fire behavior is often far larger than that saved by changing fire behavior, and more area has to be harvested than will ultimately burn over the period of effectiveness of the thinning treatment.”

Another researcher suggests: “Reducing the fraction by which C is lost in a wildfire requires the removal of a much greater amount of C, since most of the C stored in forest biomass (stem wood, branches, coarse woody debris) remains unconsumed even by high-severity wildfires.”

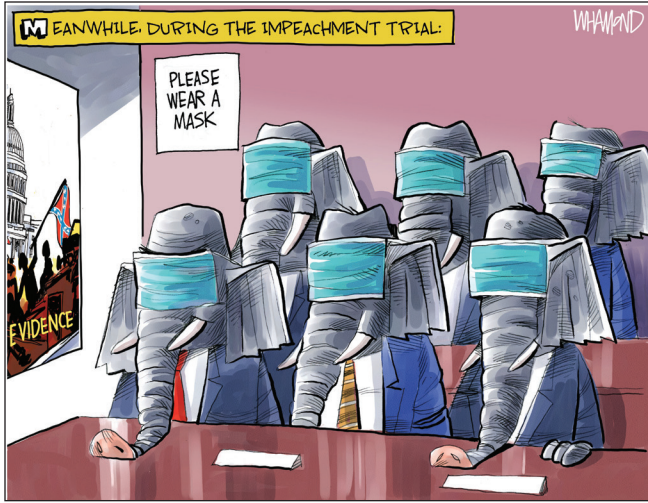
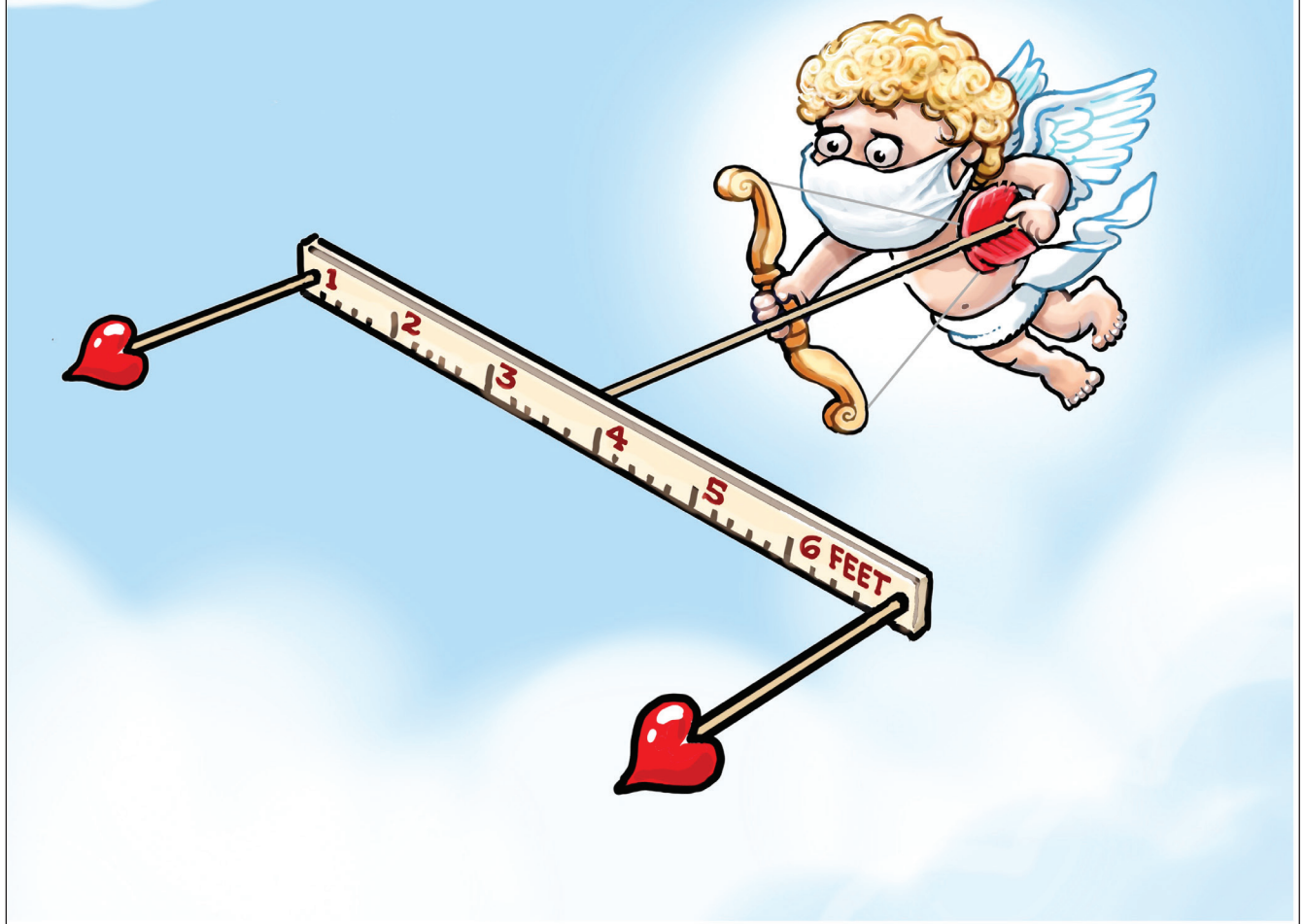
A common misconception is that wildfires release a lot of carbon. Burning does release some carbon, but the majority of the carbon in the forest remains on-site even after a severe fire. The snags left after a blaze contain much of the carbon found in a forest, while charcoal that is retained in the soil stores even more carbon.

By contrast, logging releases a tremendous amount of carbon. The biggest source of greenhouse gases in Oregon is logging, which accounts for 35% of the state’s emissions.

Plus, the carbon lost during thinning/logging takes decades to centuries to re-sequester.

The highest value of our public forests is their function as carbon reserves. Prohibiting logging would not only help sequester more carbon. In addition, putting all federal lands in carbon reserves would provide numerous other benefits, such as watershed protection, protection of wildlife habitat, preserving the ecological function of insect, wildfire, and drought that creates healthy forest ecosystems.

George Wuerthner is an ecologist who specializes in fire ecology and livestock issues.



A Public Service Announcement From The National Association Of Mask Manufacturers

Education Corner

Learning to write isn’t an easy task



SCOTT SMITH
EDUCATOR

Writing is a lifelong skill. Children are able to start developing skills used in writing as early as kindergarten and even preschool. Developing the skill of writing starts with language development and learning to share information orally with others. It can begin with show and tell where children share a special thing and simply say, “This is my truck.”

Or the parent asking the child to tell them about their day. Writing is at the highest level of processing our brains are able to perform. It is also not a natural skill that comes with body development. It has to be learned. Eating, walking, talking and observing are all natural things that most of us grow equipped to do, but writing is a whole set of complex skills that must be developed.

To be able to write there must be a strong foundation of other skills, such as language development, analyzing and understanding the elements of reading. If a child struggles with one of these three, they are apt to struggle when it comes to writing. Language development is the ability to share information.

Prior to the use of any form of written texts heritage was passed down through stories, songs or chants, and taught by elders of the group. They often used pictures to jog their memories, which would

be considered the first form of written texts.

Being able to understand information and apply it to one’s own life also is key in being able to express orally to others. This is a skill that needs nurturing prior to being able to put ideas into writing. Talking and discussing information with children helps them develop those skills. Asking questions such as: “What do you think? Where do you think that water goes?” or “How would you fix that?” will build their ability to understand and apply information which will then be more likely to transfer to their writing.

The third is understanding what reading is within our language of communication. Understanding that symbols represent letters and sounds and are placed together to create words is important. Words are formed into sentences that communicate a writers’ thoughts and information.

If a child or student is unable to express information orally, they will not be able to complete their writing task because on the developmental scale they have not learned enough oral language to apply it in writing.

Once children are able to talk openly about a subject or object they are ready to begin their writing journey. If a child or student is struggling with writing, step back and allow them to process using their oral language skills. They still might not be ready to do their own writing and additional scaffolding may be needed for them to be successful, but processing orally first will help

students get their thoughts in order, which is critical. Having them dictate the information is also a great scaffold, especially if you guide them with the proper phrasing.

Writing also is something that often isn’t once and done, which is sometimes difficult for children to learn and understand. When first learning to edit their own work they might not be able to identify how it needs to be changed. When we read our own writing back our brains often do an auto-correct so the child may struggle to recognize their mistakes. Assisting and having children read both theirs and the edited sentences will help them build the ability to recognize changes they might need to make when they are editing their own work.

Most children love to make little folded books. The idea is to take paper and fold it to create pages allowing the child to place the components of a book on each page such as a cover, title, beginning, middle, and end. Having them create these books can be a first step toward learning the writing process just as they did centuries ago with hieroglyphics. Writing is a process, and not an easy one, but with support and guidance we can all learn to communicate through writing.

Scott Smith is a Umatilla County educator with 40-plus years of experience. He taught at McNary Heights Elementary School and then for Eastern Oregon University in its teacher education program at Blue Mountain Community College. He serves on the Decoding Dyslexia Oregon board as its parent/teacher liaison.

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