

OUR VIEW

Merkley's forest ideas have merit

Oregon voters should feel pretty good about U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley's ideas on forest management, concepts he discussed last week.

Merkley wants to push the Biden administration to spend at least \$1 billion per year for logging, prescribed burns and other work to get the tinderbox forests of the state in shape to withstand disease and uncontrolled blazes.

"Management" is the key word Merkley used, and we hope that is exactly what happens. Forest management is not closure of forests. It does not mean blockading vast tracts of forestland to watch it die and then become kindling for another massive fire.

Instead, Merkley seems to back a cooperative concept where traditional rivals — such as the timber industry and conservation groups — work together to help forests.

Merkley correctly pointed out that in the 2018 federal farm bill he included authorization to double spending on forest collaborative projects. That is just not idle talk. That is putting hard cash behind a concept that is probably the only way we can move forward in the future.

Merkley's next challenge will be to get the money into the Forest Service budget.

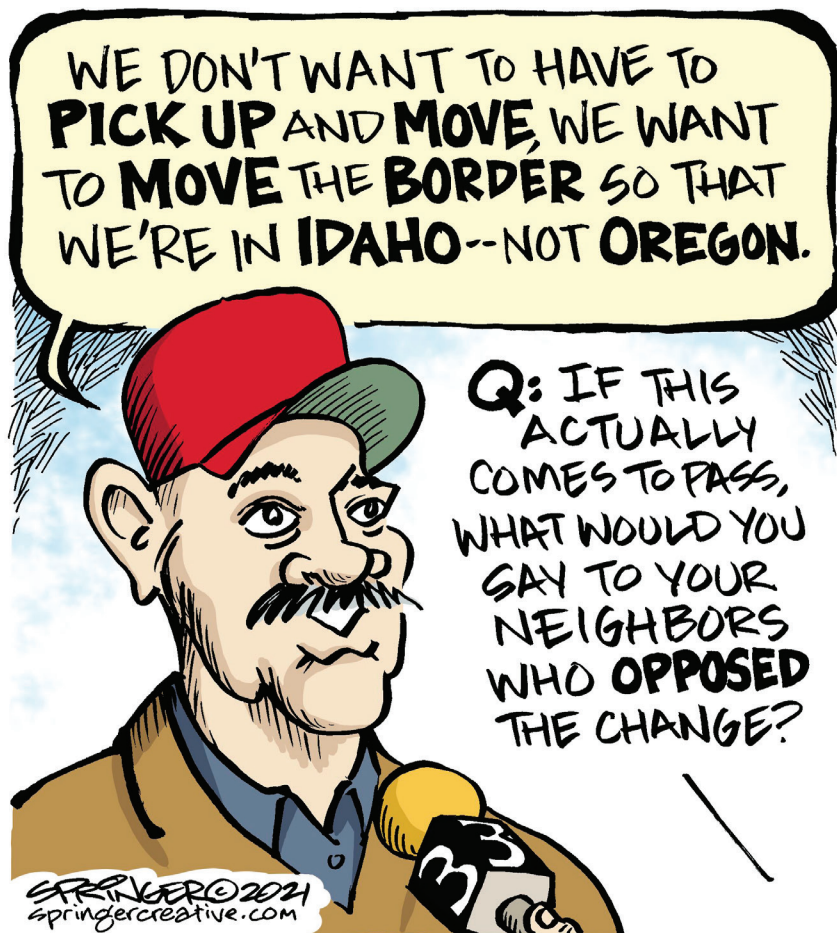
Meanwhile, Merkley's focus on cooperative projects has great merit. It seems obvious even to the most pessimistic observer of the forest situation in the Northwest that the only way forward will be through collaboration. That isn't going to be an easy sell for either environmental or timber advocates, but it is the way to the future.

For a special interest group — such as the timber industry or an environmentalist group — to believe it can have it all one way simply is not a viable solution. In fact, it is a roadblock that pushes important matters, such as the health of our forests, away and puts the focus on egos.

The cooperative model is one that will be, we think, utilized on rangeland as well.

For too long there was a "winner-takes-all" mentality regarding natural resources issues. On one side stood the timber advocates, on the other countless environmental groups. Both sides believed they were right, and both could conjure up data and rhetoric to make it all seem real.

Fact is, none of that matters when the broader problem of forest and range management is placed firmly into focus. What matters is finding compromise and solutions. Fighting over dogma is not going to get us to where we want to be in terms of forest health. Good, sound planning will.



YOUR VIEWS

Forest plan needs robust input from all stakeholders

Almost every fall since childhood, I have headed into the Blue Mountains to hunt big game. As the decades pass, I spend more and more time here, hunting black bears and turkeys in the spring and fishing the many rivers throughout the year. The Blue Mountains provide some of the best hunting and fishing anywhere in Oregon and contain more than 5.5 million acres of public lands across three national forests: the Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman.

Finding the appropriate balance of multiple uses on 5.5 million acres is no easy task. The efforts to find that balance have been ongoing for nearly 20 years through the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision process. A draft plan has already been completed twice, but they both received widespread objections and were never finalized. These forest plans determine the social, economic and ecological goals on public lands and provide a framework for future management decisions.

Strong voices and comments from sportsmen and women will be critical to ensure the final management plans contain ample fish and wildlife habitat protections. Identifying and conserving big game migration corridors, reducing road densities in certain areas and actively managing forest and stream restoration projects should be priorities in the next plan revision, all while continuing to provide for local socioeconomic priorities. Proper management of fish and wildlife habitat will help to recover struggling mule deer herds and ensure

the robust elk populations spend more time on public lands to minimize increasing damage concerns on private lands.

Michael O'Casey
Bend

Wyden can spearhead transition to clean energy economy

I would like to thank Sen. Ron Wyden for his service to the state of Oregon and our nation, and encourage him to continue to take action to create change in order to power Oregon and the U.S. with 100% clean energy.

Wyden has risen as a leader on sustainable practices: working on a just transition toward a renewable energy future and ensuring relief for Oregon communities impacted by natural disasters exacerbated by the changing climate.

Wyden has introduced and supported bills to protect Oregon's rivers, improve soil health and crop resilience, ban U.S. oil exports, create millions of good-paying jobs in repairing America's infrastructure and reduce air and water pollution. These actions are among the many that have shown that Wyden is in favor of climate legislation and community resiliency that puts the planet and its people before the profit of unsustainable and outdated businesses.

As the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and a senior member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Wyden has the ability not only to understand the importance of transitioning to a clean energy economy but also the connections to take action and provide funding for this transition. In

particular, Wyden has the opportunity to help ensure strong climate action in President Biden's American Job Plan.

We need bold climate legislation that promotes the transition to a clean energy economy, and I am confident that Sen. Wyden will step up to help lead this integral project.

Sydney Dedrick
Bend

Diverse student population makes for better teaching

I encourage all Eastern Oregon voters to contact your Oregon state legislators and ask them to support the Oregon Opportunity Grant for college students. Federal student loans and Pell Grants cannot provide enough support for lower-income Oregon students to attend college.

I have been teaching in Oregon high schools, colleges and universities for more than 20 years and have seen the value of these Opportunity Grants firsthand. Thanks to these programs, more of Oregon's students are able to attend college and serve their communities across the state. My classes at Oregon State University and the University of Oregon are definitely more engaging places for learning when I have students from across the state from different economic backgrounds and with diverse political opinions.

By supporting the Oregon Opportunity Grant you can make my job as a writing teacher even better by sending more of Eastern Oregon's amazing high school graduates to college.

Stephen Rust
Eugene

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