

OUR VIEW

Caution, common sense can reduce wildfire risk

One blaze is already burning and the summer outlook for wildfires is not looking any better with the passage of time.

While lightning is the chief culprit in most forest fires in Eastern Oregon — and no one can do much about Mother Nature — that does not take the public off the hook regarding caution and using common sense when out in the woods this summer.

We live in an area that beckons with outstanding recreational opportunities. Just look in any direction from the Grande Ronde Valley and there are places that offer great outdoor venues. Drive less than an hour south into Baker County, or venture northward into Wallowa County, and one will find even more recreational prospects.

Those exceptional outdoor locations, though, are always at risk in the summer of becoming tinderboxes and igniting. Last year, portions of Western and Southern Oregon were traumatized and scorched by out-of-control wildfires that left a deadly wake. Towns were burned and people died. We do not want to see that kind of scenario play out here.

That means, then, those who wish to play in our forests and enjoy camping and other recreational opportunities must pay attention and use caution as the watchword.

The wildfire danger is always there, but this year, with drought haunting most of the West, the risk is greater. That means forests and grasslands are potentially going to be drier than normal.

Safeguarding our public forests and lands during the summer months is not difficult. Key tips can make a huge difference. For example, campers and those heading into the woods to recreate should ensure they check their vehicles and generators and confirm they function. When pulling a trailer into a camping spot, make sure safety chains and other equipment are not going to drag on the road and possibly cause sparks.

Campfires should be small and contained with either rocks or a metal ring. Campers should also be careful to pick the right spot for a campfire. Keep campfires away from tents, trees and dry grass. And always makes sure the campfire is out before you depart for home.

Those are simple and easy steps to ensure the things we enjoy the most about our area remain viable and as pristine as possible throughout the summer.

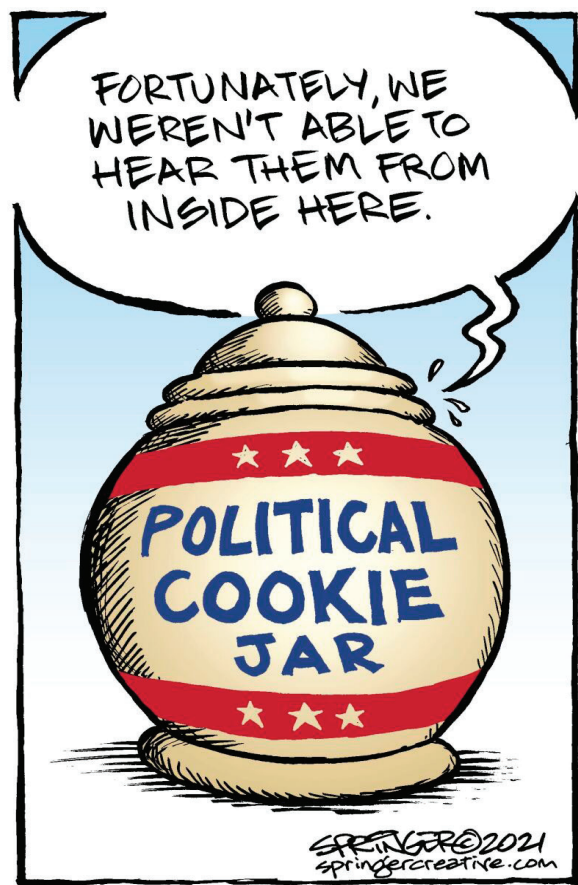
We cannot control Mother Nature and lightning strikes are part of the summer, but we can do a lot to minimize risks caused by humans.

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YOUR VIEWS

Honor sacrifices and service of veterans on Flag Day

On Flag Day, June 14, we commemorate the adoption of the American flag. For more than 200 years, Old Glory has served as a symbol of our nation's freedom and as a source of pride for our citizens. In patriotic parades and musical salutes, we support our local military and recognize the significance of the Stars and Stripes.

Flag Day is also a time to honor our nation's veterans who have willingly served to protect the flag and the ideals it represents. With each ceremonial fold of the flag, we recognize the principles on which our country was founded: liberty, unity, justice and sacrifice.

On Flag Day, join me and more than three-quarters of a million American Legion Auxiliary members across the nation as we honor our service members and reflect on their commitment to our country. A Flag Retirement Ceremony will take place at the VFW High Valley Post 4060 in Union, with the VFW and the La Grande American Legion Post 43 working as a team. The ceremony begins at 10 a.m. June 14 at 518 N. Main St., Union.

Whether you are a veteran, the loved one of a service member or a patriotic citizen, there are many ways to honor local heroes, such as visiting veterans' homes, assisting with recognition ceremonies, collecting personal memories and photos from veterans to create keepsake journals or simply flying the U.S. flag in tribute to their sacrifice.

As you wave the flag on June 14, remember that showing your gratitude for veterans does not have to be limited to Flag Day, Memorial Day or Veterans Day. Throughout the year, join the American Legion Auxiliary in serving veterans, military and their families who have sacrificed for our freedom.

The American Legion Auxiliary is a community of volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families. To learn more visit www.ALAforVeterans.org.

Kathi Karnowski
President, American Legion Auxiliary Unit 43, La Grande

GRH Hospice volunteers surprised by closure

For the past 14 years I have been affiliated as a volunteer with the Grande Ronde Hospital Hospice and No One Dies Alone programs to help meet the needs of dying per-

sons, their friends and families. These programs have brought dignity and respect to countless persons since the 1980s.

So it was with astonishment that I, and other volunteers, read about the closure of the Grande Ronde Hospital Hospice program (Worker shortage forces closure of Grande Ronde hospice program, Tuesday, June 1). There was no prior contact from GRHH sharing the news and perhaps thanking us for years of volunteer service.

Nothing. Volunteers are the unsung heroes of hospice programs. You will find them sitting with patients so family members can take a much-needed break, reading a favorite book out loud or watching a video. More than that, there are deeper moments when a volunteer may listen to questions about the meaning of life and death.

No One Dies Alone is just that. Before this closure, GRH Hospice patients could be assured they would not die alone in isolation. My favorite three-hour shift was late at night. During this time we provided no medical care, but we sat vigil in the last hours of life as this person traveled on. No family and friends nearby — we NODA volunteers were there. When NODA volunteers were called, no one died alone.

Again, I say: Did we volunteers not deserve personal communication about the program closing and not have to be startled and saddened by reading about it in the newspaper?

Cheryl Simpson
La Grande

Lack of Christian work ethic at root of labor shortage

Recently, I heard of a worker shortage. A trip to La Grande showed evidence with many offers to hire. An online visit to the U.S. Department of Labor confirmed that, as of March, our nation is short about 8 million workers.

Some of the excuses for not earning jobs are the lack of child care, people wanting their old jobs back, the demand for jobs higher up the chain and, finally, if the government is paying me not to work, or more than I would be working, why should I get a job?

Here is where God comes in. Religion was, in fact, so important to George Washington that during his farewell address from presidency he said, "Of all dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. And let us with cau-

tion indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion."

Also, 50 of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Christians. Perhaps we should return to Christian beliefs, such as good ethics and labor. Here is a Protestant work ethic (paraphrased from "What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?" by D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe):

1. We do not worry.
2. We have help from God.
3. We have wisdom from God.
4. We are given power to persevere.
5. Whatever we do is for the glory of God.

Furthermore, "If anyone is not willing to work, he will not eat." While this can be interpreted harshly, think about it: If too many people do not work, eventually their finances or the government's finances will run out, thus provoking economic shutdown and even famine.

In Christianity, honor is in all work, because we work for the glory of the Lord.

Noah Platz
Union

What is fair for the goose should be fair for the gander

My life psychology has always been "plant a seed or perspective and then watch to see how it grows." I personally believe a state policy and/or regulation should be positive for all concerned — both rural and urban. Let's stop and look at the topic of predator controls from a broad sense.

One only has to review past statewide votes to observe who is supporting policy for introducing wolves back into our state. I remember a statewide vote to protect bears and cougars. Where did that support come from? Now I wonder how the urban folks would vote for bears, cougars and wolves being reintroduced in their backyards?

Statewide legislation and regulations affect all Oregonians, right? Therefore, shouldn't those wild creatures be released evenly statewide? Yes, a really wild (pardon the pun) idea but what is fair for the goose should be fair for the gander. There are many semi-rural areas in the I-5 corridor that would be ideal for all three species. After all, years ago they roamed all across the land that now is the state of Oregon.

Ken Parsons
La Grande

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Phone: 541-963-3161

Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-781-3214

Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

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