

OUR VIEW

# Helping people who need it

More people are using area food banks, a signal that many are being left behind in a supposedly robust economy, which means regional assistance organizations will need more help this holiday season.

Statistics tell part of the story and that piece of the current tale of woe for those on the edge financially isn't an uplifting one.

In Boardman, a food pantry that services residents in Morrow County showed an almost 150% increase in the number of people it served since 2020. The Salvation Army also reported a 50% increase in the number of people it served.

The nonprofit Community Connection of Northeast Oregon Inc. serves food banks in Grant, Baker, Union and Wallowa counties and its numbers have also climbed slightly this year compared to last.

The big picture, then, shows that rather than dropping off, the need at area food banks and pantries is still strong and could get a lot stronger as the holidays hover on the horizon.

Food banks and pantries across the region are not-for-profit organizations. That means they are wholly dependent on product from the state and donations. That's where the rest of us come in.

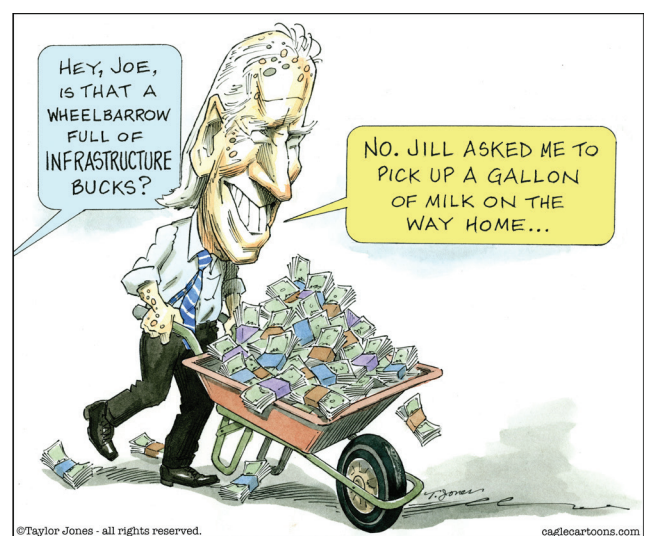
While the needs of those on the financial edge always seem to garner attention during the holiday season, the need is year-round. We can't forget, when Jan. 2 rolls around, those in need are still out there, still need help.

So first, those of us who can should donate to the local food bank as soon and as often as they can. Those donations don't have to be only money or food. Many area banks also need personal care items such as paper towels and toilet paper or laundry detergent.

Why help?

Besides the fact it is the humane thing to do, donating to a local food bank means you get to make a real difference now. Your donation, your assistance, will help a family or children survive. It's that simple. Your help can be the difference between a family struggling to find food to being able to have dinner. While it may be hard to imagine for many of us, that is the case for many in our region.

So, let's get together and help our local food banks and pantries. It will be a chance to deliver real change and to make a difference that will resonate in the future.



# 'Saving' the Owyhee country



JOEL HASSE  
OTHER VIEWS

The Owyhee is under attack. Not by the people who use it, but by the government, who "knows best."

We are being told that we need to close it off to protect it.

I have spent the last 20 years camping, rafting, hiking and traveling much of the Owyhee country. It is a very beautiful part of our state. It is also extremely remote. Upstream from the Owyhee Dam, the river stretches approximately 220 miles with the largest town it passes being Rome, population somewhere under 10. The remainder of the river winds through country so rough it is accessible mostly via foot or raft. There are a few roads that intersect the river but most of them have been closed.

Government has decided that this remote area needs protection. I am not sure from what (mostly the government). Currently, there is a bill being sponsored by Wyden and Merkley that will "protect" the area. I fear it is another "divide and conquer" attempt by officials who

have little or no knowledge of life outside of the city.

If this legislation is enacted, we will see the provisions of the bill changed, one group at a time, until the Owyhee is locked up so tight, no one will be able to access it. We are talking about an area that has temperature extremes of 120 in the summer to well below minus-20 in the winter, making it an area you can visit about four months out of the year, spring and fall.

Let's talk about some of the government's other "successes" on nearby areas. I visited Stockade Mountain, an area west and a little north of the Owyhee. I had along on this trip a fellow hunter, and we were scouting for antelope. He had been very successful in this area 20 years or so earlier and touted it as a much coveted spot to hunt. We did a trip about three weeks before the start of the season. Government had decided to eliminate grazing on much of this land. In doing so, there was no one left who really cared for the condition of the land. It has turned to an unusable wasteland. The cheatgrass is so bad you can't leave your vehicle. We saw zero wildlife in the area.

Take the Salmon River in Idaho. It was decided a few years ago that it had to be "protected." It is now so

covered with invasive species that thousands of acres are inaccessible due to star thistle. The knapweed is rampant. More and more wildlife are leaving the area due to lack of feed.

Look at the promises made when the Eagle Cap Wilderness was enacted. We were told that the trails would be kept open and maintained, and the parking would be free to access it. Neither of these are true today.

We were told that we would have free parking at snow parks if we had a licensed snowmobile. That lasted about five years.

We were told that we would be saving our rivers if we allowed an invasive species permit fee be enacted, and it would only be \$7 per raft. It is now \$19, with no real reason for the increase.

Be aware, the government is great at promising and then taking away, splitting out groups affected so that the opposition is divided and unable to beat them.

*Joel Hasse was born and raised in La Grande. He is an avid river rafter, hunter and officiates high school football. He loves the outdoors and spends as much time as he can exploring the desert in the Jordan Valley area.*

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