

OUR VIEW

# Investing in a brighter future

Poor decisions by lawmakers in the Oregon Legislature is not a new phenomenon, but a decision by elected leaders to approve bond funds to help upgrade parks around the state was a good move.

The decision means the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department can spend up to \$50 million on park renovations across the state over a two-year period. The money will help fund renovations for new visitor centers, restrooms and parking lots.

The funds are very much an investment in the future and in tourism for the state. Parks are, in a sense, the face of our state for people from other parts of the nation and the world.

Money generated from tourism can be one of those hard-to-quantify elements for residents of the state. Those of us who live and work in Eastern Oregon know of our parks and pass by them frequently. What is more difficult to ascertain for many is that those parks generate real dollars for state coffers.

According to Travel Oregon, state tourism is a \$12 billion industry that employs thousands. So, while our parks are designed to showcase the best of our state, the industry behind them is an economic engine that benefits communities.

That is why the planned upgrade are, in a real way, a solid investment.

The upgrades, set to occur between May 2022 and March 2023, will add value to our state in other ways too. Eastern Oregon's parks — stretched from remote Malheur County to Hood River County — are gateways to our unique culture for residents and visitors.

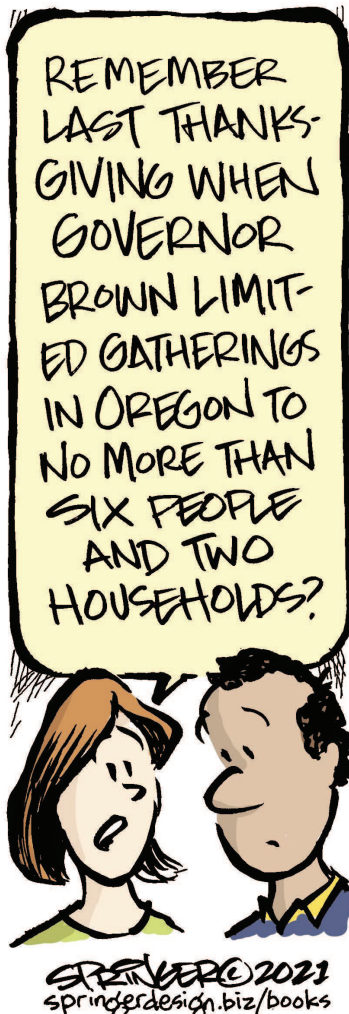
Investing in infrastructure — and parks are part of infrastructure — is never an easy decision, but this time lawmakers in Salem got it right. They understood that we can't let our parks disintegrate and become a totem of the past but instead need to be refurbished with a sizeable investment that will deliver a brighter future.

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YOUR VIEWS

**Wyden is mucking around in our forests again**

Beware: Sen. Wyden is mucking around in our forests again. I attended a meeting in Wallowa about 10 years ago. There were fewer than 10 people there and Sen. Ron Wyden was one of those attending. I'd gone that day to report on federal funding for the Wallowa-Union Railroad Authority. Minutes into the meeting a local business owner thanked Wyden for securing \$12 million for federal purchase a large piece of agricultural land in the Imnaha river canyon lands. Upon hearing this, my focus changed completely as I recognized the big story being the federal government purchasing thousands of acres of private agricultural land. The parcel had been acquired by a private entity during the era of the failed Blue Mountain Land Transfer-BMLT, around 2006. During the same time, the land-purchaser had actually been working with Rep. Greg Walden on legislation that would have forced certain private-to-public land transfers. When that conflict of interest became public, Walden backed away from the legislation and BMLT died on the vine. This left the land-purchaser in a pickle with thousands of acres of land and a large loan from a local institution. Next, that piece of Imnaha property becomes the highest priority, top of the list, for federal land acquisition, and in steps the Nature Conservancy, United States Forest Service-USFS and Wyden.

After about five years, Nature Conservancy purchased the property from the private land-purchaser and holds the property while Wyden works to get federal funding, from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, so the USFS can purchase the property, circa 2009-2012. When I learned all this, problems began to surface. First, I learned that the private owner, Nature Conservancy and USFS all used the same land appraiser. Next, a well-respected, local ag-land appraiser claimed they'd violated laws, including the "larger parcel rule" after the private purchaser submitted a verbal plan to construct a 17-parcel housing subdivision. I was informed this inflated the land's value by about 3.5 times. Now we see Wyden mucking around our forests again and I wonder to whose benefit.

**Brian Addison  
Baker City**

others and living to fight another day became job one. It was a tall order. Eight U.S. battleships were severely damaged during the surprise attack; 188 U.S. aircraft were destroyed, and 2,403 Americans died. The USS Arizona, launched in 1915, was one of America's first oil-fueled battleships. Small amounts of oil continue to percolate to the harbor's surface, just above where the ship rests in the shallow waters. The oil leaks are visible to those who visit the USS Arizona Memorial. Pearl Harbor survivors — stoic, heroic and with great respect — were the first to christen the Arizona's leakage as "black tears." The crews that were lost on Dec. 7, 1941, no longer feel pain but their tragic fates still touch those who knew them or knew of them. The Arizona is not just a memorial. It's not just a shipwreck. It is a tomb for more than 900 of the ship's 1,177 crew who lost their lives. We must remember Pearl Harbor not just as the opening salvo of a long war. We must remember it as it was — an ordinary Sunday morning in which unsuspecting American servicemen displayed extraordinary heroism. Eighty years later, we still remember them. Forgetting their heroism would be an additional act of infamy. God bless the brave souls of Pearl Harbor. Let us honor them and the ones who served before and since.

**Kathi Karnowski, president,  
American Legion Auxiliary  
Unit 43, La Grande**

**Pearl Harbor Day — remembering tragedy and bravery**

Dec. 7, 1941, is remembered as a date of infamy, but it should be equally recalled as a day of bravery. Fifteen Medals of Honor were awarded to U.S. sailors as a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Fifty-one Navy Crosses were earned. Fifty-three Silver Stars. Thousands of other acts of heroism occurred that day 80 years ago. Many of those acts were not recognized with medals because documentation was not a priority. Saving

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**THE OBSERVER**  
An independent newspaper founded in 1896

[www.lagrandeobserver.com](http://www.lagrandeobserver.com) Phone: 541-963-3161

Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, Oregon 97801  
Published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays (except postal holidays) by EO Media Group, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

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POSTMASTER Send address changes to: The Observer, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850

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