

OUR VIEW

Compromise key to reaching shared goals

Cooperation between different stakeholders and groups with contrasting ideologies is all too often an unmet goal, but the recent news that the Upper Grande Ronde Watershed Partnership Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Plan was recognized by the state shows what success can be if patrons with different views work together.

The plan, at least six years in the making, essentially tackles the thorny problem of meeting the water needs of the region in the Upper Grande Ronde Basin. The blueprint furnishes a number of innovative ideas — from utilizing aboveground storage to widening sections of specific waterways.

The important element of the plan and its ideas is they would all be executed within existing environmental laws. There will be no rush to build dams or throw up reservoirs or damage streambanks. Instead, the plan will be used as a foundation for a viable, and methodical approach to water availability in the future.

The plan is also notable because of the way it was designed. A host of different agencies and groups — from the Union County Farm Bureau to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to area farmers and ranchers — gave input on it.

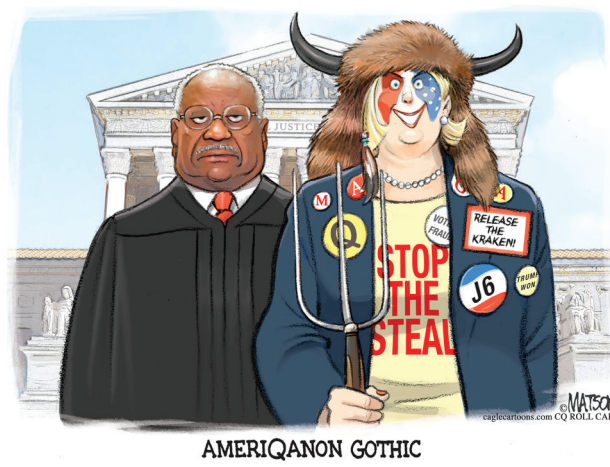
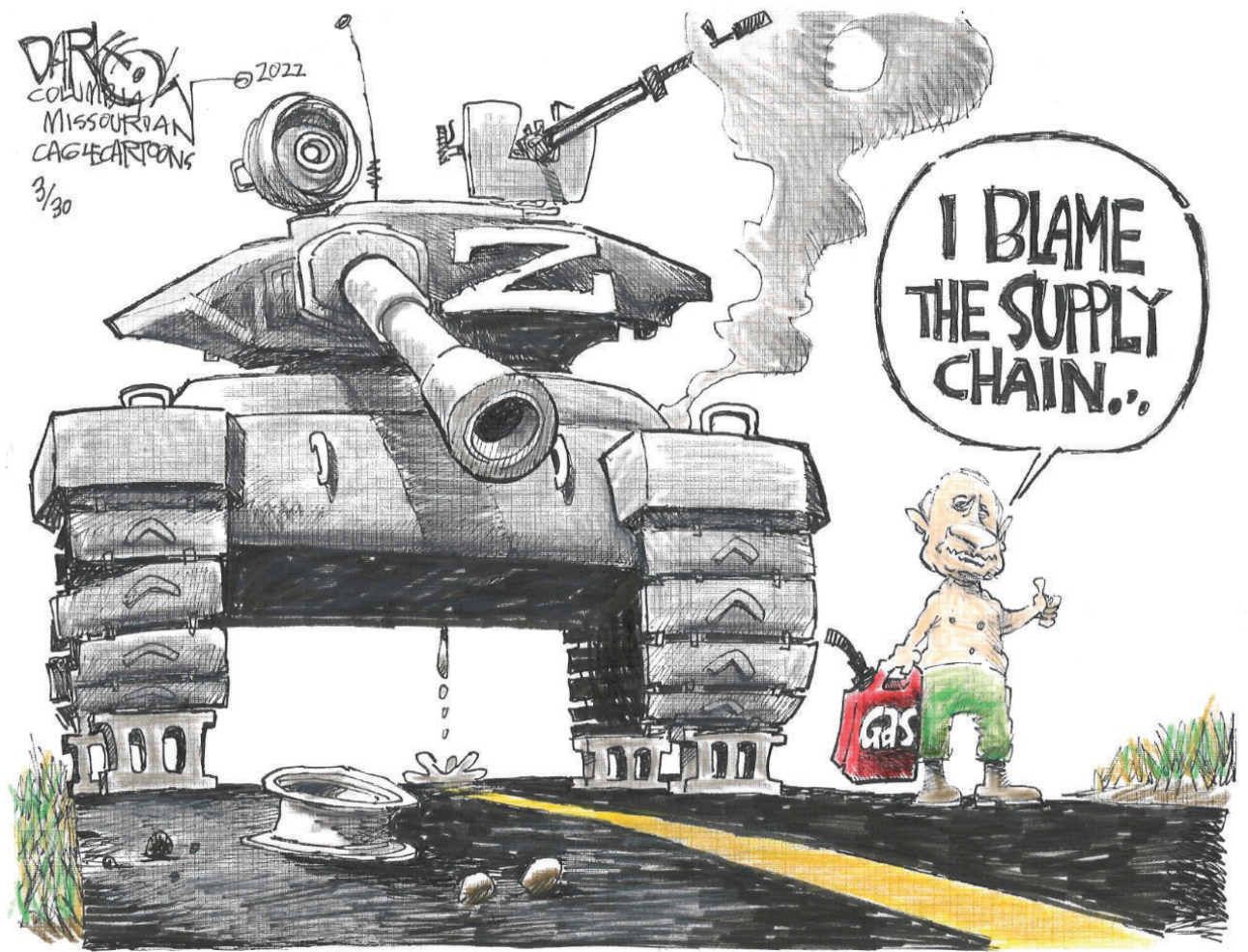
That type of cooperation should be a template for the future, not just in Union County but across the state and beyond.

The idea to bring a diverse group of people with varying and competing interests together to iron out a plan that focuses on the environment isn't new, but it isn't always successful. The watershed partnership is a visible example of everyone managing to work together toward a common goal.

Something similar occurred in nearby Malheur County where U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, worked with a coalition of conservations and ranchers and residents to create a framework to safeguard the Owyhee Canyonlands. Wyden's effort showed ideological differences can be put aside to create a compromise over a highly contested environmental issue.

Compromise means not everyone gets exactly what they want, as is and was the case in southern Malheur County, but the Canyonlands plan and the Upper Grande Ronde Watershed blueprint should be in the front of the environmental management playbook going forward.

Both plans show that we can, indeed, work together to reach a goal that does what we all want — manage our natural resources in a responsible manner.



YOUR VIEWS

Voting no on May school bond will hurt kids, community

I am a local business owner who has been in La Grande since 2000. I fully support and will vote Yes for Bond 31-105, which would allow the school district to build a new multi-use building. There is a ton of misinformation floating around about this bond. It will not raise your taxes and a No vote will only hurt our kids and the community.

I did not support the mandatory masks for the kids, and I did not agree with the way the board and superintendent dealt with COVID issues, but the bond is separate from that. I have two kids, one in the new Central school and one in the middle school, and they use the Annex often. This building must be replaced, and this bond gives us the ability to do that.

This new building will greatly increase sports, recreation and events in a way that we don't have the ability to do now. The new building will also address ADA accessibility, which the current Annex does not provide.

Paul Swigert
La Grande

School bond will improve handicap accessibility

When I suddenly found myself in a wheelchair, my perspective on many things in life changed. I suppose I was peripherally aware of handicap access, but now it is a daily need. As a whole our community is probably not much different from other rural communities, developed before access for people with disabilities was considered.

So, we have streets without sidewalks, sidewalks without curb cuts, businesses with steps at the front door. And, we have old school buildings that are not accessible. Retrofitting to accommodate all these needs is expensive and takes a lot of planning.

I serve on the La Grande Traffic, Streets and Sidewalks committee with an eye toward improving streets, sidewalks and handicap access. We have developed a long-range plan for this work.

I am a retired educator, former principal at Central Elementary School, and I now serve on the La Grande School Board. The work of the board is diverse but focused on providing the best edu-

cation we can for the kids. Facilities play a role in this work. We have some really nice buildings, some recently built and updated thanks to a voter-passed bond.

They are fully accessible. We have some really old buildings that we still use such as the Annex up by the Middle School. It is in need of a major upgrade and it is not handicap accessible. The school district has conducted a facilities study and found it to be less expensive to replace the Annex than to fix it.

In May a bond will be before the voters that, if approved, will allow the district to build a replacement facility, one that will better serve the needs of the students and families and citizens of our community. And it will be handicap accessible! And, as an added bonus, the bond will be combined with a state grant and our tax rates will not go up.

I urge you to study this bond measure and vote "Yes." As a handicapped citizen of La Grande, I look forward to being able to roll into this wonderful new building and watch our kids compete.

Bruce Kevan
La Grande

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THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896

www.lagrandeobserver.com

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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