

OUR VIEW

# Poaching wolves only makes matters worse

If anyone wanted to help out the animal rights crowd in its efforts to reinstate federal Endangered Species Act protection to all wolves, all someone would have to do is randomly kill the predators.

Since wolves were reintroduced into parts of the West, the animal rights crowd has been hollering that, unless wolves are fully protected under the ESA, they could be indiscriminately killed.

In a few parts of Eastern Oregon, that appears to be happening. In the past two years, eight wolves were poisoned and seven were shot and killed.

This was not people protecting themselves or their livestock. This was people poaching and breaking the law.

Animal rights and environmental groups are pushing right now trying to convince the federal government to reinstate ESA protections for wolves in the Northern Rockies. The Capital Press recently published a column by two members of the U.S. Senate making the case for state management of wolves in Idaho and Montana.

The senators are 100% correct. Idaho, Montana and other states where wolves have been imposed on ranchers and others have done their best. Reinstating federal protections would take management decisions out of the states' hands.

If you think there are problems with wolves now, wait until management decisions are returned to the hands of federal bureaucrats in Washington, D.C.

No one has been more vociferous than the Capital Press in criticizing how the reintroduction of wolves has been managed. Time and again, we have stood up and pointed out the shortcomings of federal wildlife managers and the unfairness their actions have inflicted on ranchers, whose livelihoods depend on their ability to raise cattle and sheep.

The basis of those criticisms was that wolves have been allowed to run roughshod through portions of the rural West, attacking cattle, sheep, wildlife and other animals such as working dogs. We argued that ranchers also were the victims but were willing to follow the law.

Ranchers have worked hard to use non-lethal means of separating wolves from cattle and sheep.

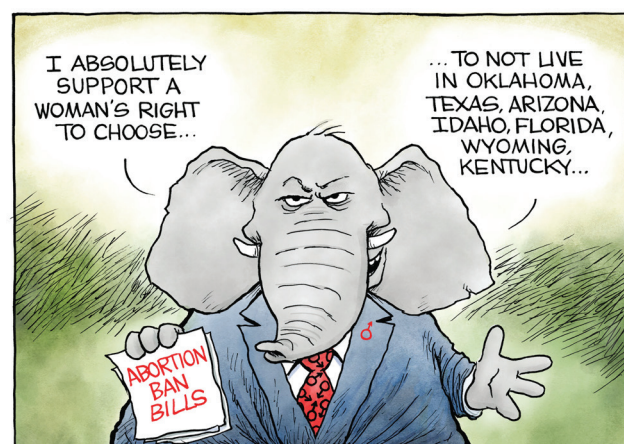
But all of that is for naught when irresponsible parties take the law into their own hands. It accomplishes nothing — except to put law-abiding ranchers on the defensive.

We'll say it again. We are unimpressed by how federal wildlife managers have done their jobs managing wolves. From the beginning, they needed to do more to keep wolves away from livestock.

But we are 100% opposed to illegally poaching wolves.

Doing that only gives the animal rights and environmental crowd more ammunition in the court of law — and the court of public opinion — to criticize ranchers.

Stop the poaching. It only makes matters worse.



# Is rural-urban divide myth or reality?



**DICK HUGHES**  
OTHER VIEWS

For your political reading pleasure, the early edition of the state voters' pamphlet for the May 17 election — the Military/Overseas Voters' Guide — is online from the Secretary of State's Office.

At the tail end are three local ballot measures. Ones in Klamath and Douglas counties would continue the unlikely quest to merge Eastern and Southern Oregon into Idaho. The voters' guide endorsements from Move Oregon's Border ask, "Who do you trust with your child's future: Idaho government or Oregon government?"

The third measure, in coastal Charleston, would tax short-term lodging to promote tourism, support public safety and spruce up the community. An argument in favor states, "All of the funds stay within the county and nothing is sent to Salem, benefiting the area directly."

Ah, the fraught relationship between rural Oregon and the state capital, although more often it's characterized as the rest of Oregon vs. Portland.

Is the rural-urban divide a myth or daily reality? Talking with reporters before this year's legislative session, state Sen. James Manning Jr., D-Eugene, called it a myth because he represents both urban and rural areas. He said it's his responsibility to understand all constituents' concerns.

Does that happen with all, even

most, legislators? In this election year, it seems worth quizzing legislative and gubernatorial candidates about the urban-rural relationship. How many urban candidates have visited all 60 Oregon House districts? How many rural politicians have gotten to know every legislative district in the Portland metro area?

Certainly, many issues are statewide, such as child care. Or housing, which is in such short supply everywhere that Salem ranks even worse than Portland in comparative housing affordability. Hospitality workers in tourist areas, whether along the coast or in winter sports areas, cannot afford to live there.

Yet vast differences exist between big cities, with revenue to pay for government services, and sparsely populated areas. For example, much of rural Oregon must depend on state police for law enforcement protection, as Sen. Fred Girod, R-Lyons, reminds his colleagues.

Drug cartels gained a foothold in Southern Oregon for illicit marijuana grows, he said, because Oregon's population nearly doubled since Tom McCall was governor while the number of troopers dropped by more than one-third.

Other rural examples: Klamath County has the highest unemployment rate in Oregon, not having fully recovered from the Great Recession. Internet access is so poor in Jackson and Josephine counties that 22% of respondents to a recent survey said they had considered moving.

Meanwhile, rural residents have legitimate reasons for believing they

have less say in state government. They increasingly are outnumbered. "This is why Oregon passes laws that kill southern Oregon industries and values," said Mike McCarter, of Citizens for Greater Idaho, in his voters' guide argument.

It's important to note, however, that the 2022 Legislature took several actions aimed at helping rural Oregon. That included devoting \$100 million for rural projects vetted by a team consisting of Reps. David Gomberg, D-Otis; Mark Owens, R-Crane; and Greg Smith, R-Heppner; and Senate Republican Leader Tim Knopp, of Bend.

Pollster John Horvick, of DHM Research, recently pointed out that only 42% of voters live in the Portland metro area. Of the remainder, 27% live in the other Willamette Valley counties, and 31% in the rest of the state.

However, a majority of Democrats (53%) reside in the Portland area, whereas a plurality of Republicans (41%) live outside Portland and the Willamette Valley.

Bear in mind that Democrats, Republicans, Independent, unaffiliated and minor-party voters can be found everywhere, including Democrats in drought-stricken Klamath County.

Democrats included this statement in their voters' guide argument against creating a county Border Relocation Board: "It won't rain any more here just by calling ourselves part of Idaho."

■ Dick Hughes has been covering the Oregon political scene since 1976.

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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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Phone: 541-963-3161

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

Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

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

STAFF

Regional publisher ..... Karrine Brogotti  
Interim editor ..... Andrew Cutler  
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