

OUR VIEW

Residents come to the aid of their neighbors

A meal site was set up. A Joseph company sent sheets of plywood to residents and businesses. Construction workers busy with a state contract project stopped and helped out residents. Those were the types of actions seen across Wallowa County last week in the wake of a once-in-a-century hailstorm that triggered damage seemingly everywhere.

Those efforts — and the work of so many others who stepped up to help — illustrate the kind of grit and determination that has always been a hallmark of Wallowa County.

Every one of the businesses and every one of the individuals who as a group or individually decided to lend a hand deserve a great deal of praises.

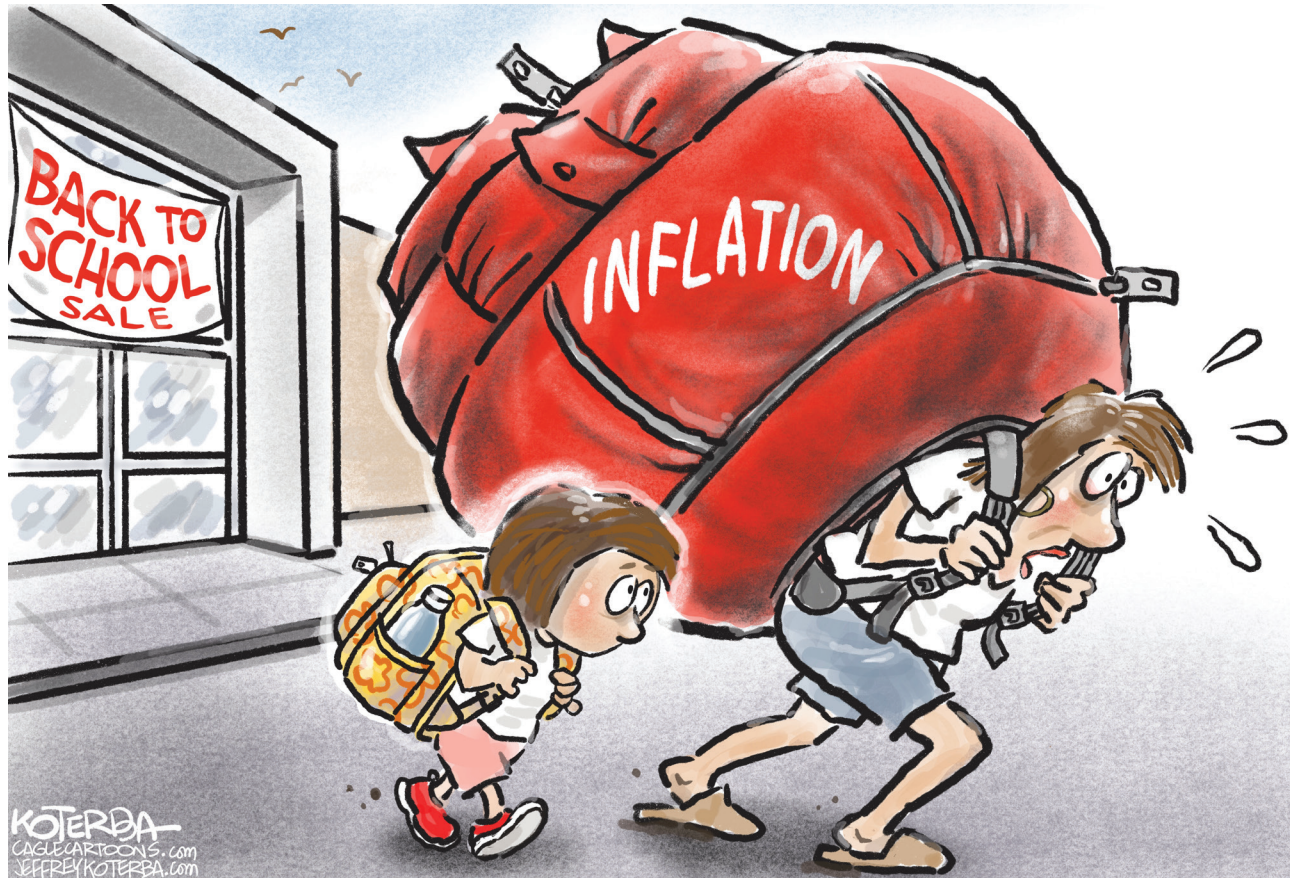
As a nation and a state, we often find ourselves locked into heated political disagreements. Sometimes we don't see eye to eye on issues. Often we are vehement in our support for our own cause. From a distance, it could be seen that we, as a nation, state or region have more to argue about than we do to agree with.

Yet when disaster strikes, when, so to speak, the chips are down, we see individual efforts like those that were — and continue to be — so common in Wallowa County.

No one can control the weather and certainly no one expected the kind of storm that lashed the county last week. Life is unpredictable as is the weather. Yet one thing we can count on and can predict with a high degree of certainty is when tragedy arrives there are going to be people on the farms and ranches and in the towns across our region that will seek to help, rather than hinder. People who will follow the better angels of their nature and come to the rescue.

That kind of assistance can be rare but, at least in Eastern Oregon, it is not. The people of Wallowa County not only showed their true nature in terms of helping their neighbor, but also demonstrated the kind of resiliency that is uncommon in many places. Rather than complaining or giving up, people jumped into debris and decided to make a difference.

The entire county should be proud of its residents and businesses, and remember that why we may disagree sometimes, when it comes to a disaster we are going to step up and help out.



YOUR VIEWS

Power line appeals later this month

We learned from the Baker City Herald on July 15 that Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett held a meeting with local landowners potentially facing eminent domain by Idaho Power's plans to build the massive 500 kV Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) transmission line. The line would cross five counties in Eastern Oregon, approximately 300 miles.

First, I want to commend Commissioner Bennett. Since the beginning of this B2H saga he has fought to preserve the heritage of Baker County and the Oregon Trail, as well as retain the integrity of the tourism destination they have built — the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center.

Now, he is following through on a promise that he and fellow Baker County commissioners passed (via a resolution) long ago, that is, if any residents of their county were facing eminent domain that the county would do what they could to help, including filing an amicus (friends of the court) brief in support of the landowners.

The latter has not occurred yet, but Commissioner Bennett is demonstrating his concern and leadership. Where are the commissioners in other counties?

Second, I want to clarify a misstatement made at this meeting. The attorney that was quoted in the article was incorrect in his statements about the B2H and the status of the Stop B2H Coalition.

Be assured that the Stop B2H Coalition is alive, well, and still fighting for the public — protecting our lands and habitats, preserving our heritage.

The B2H is not a done deal. At the end of August, Oregon's Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) will be in La Grande to hear 30 appeals in the case. The procedural errors over the past two years, made by an administrative law judge, have demonstrated a bias against the public and toward the utility and their high-powered attorneys.

EFSC's final decision is expected this fall. If we do not prevail, Stop

B2H intends to appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court (a judicial court). For updates and news, go to: www.stopb2h.org Once we know the times and format of the meetings on Aug. 29-31 we will post to our website and our Facebook page.

Fuji Kreider
secretary/treasurer,
Stop B2H Coalition
La Grande

You should be concerned about Hot Lake quarry

An application to significantly expand a small existing quarry above Hot Lake Lane is pending before the Union County Planning Department. It was supposed to be reviewed on July 25, but the applicant has asked for a delay until Aug 22.

The applicant is asking for an amendment to the Union County General Plan and for approval of a 40-acre baserock and aggregate quarry that will eventually cut 200 feet vertically into the hillside. However, he does not satisfy the basic requirements for such an amendment.

Union County residents should be concerned about this project. The land is designated Critical Big Game Habitat, but the application lacks the required big game plan. The site sits above Ladd Creek and will affect habitat of waterfowl, wading birds (including sandhill cranes) and upland game birds.

There is no consultation or opinion from ODFW included with the application. There is no traffic plan included with the application, although truck traffic from the quarry will head north past the Hot Lake RV park and hotel, significantly impacting operations at those popular tourist destinations. There is no water management plan to cover the possibility of heavy storm runoff or snowmelt running through the quarry and into Ladd Creek.

And, of course, there is the scenic impact of a 40-acre aggregate site on visitors to Ladd Marsh and travelers heading east out of La Grande toward Union.

If this proposal worries you, I'm

sure the Union County Planning Department and the Union County Commissioners would like to hear from you. Letters from the public could well slow this project down until the wrinkles are ironed out.

David Moyal
La Grande

B2H will allow Idaho to use Oregon's cleaner energy

Many, many years ago when Idaho Power proposed and pushed hard for the B2H line to come through Oregon to serve Idaho only, locals rose up against it and I was active in that cause. So many issues and many negative impacts have still not been addressed or resolved. At that time, I was in Meridian, Idaho, often and was taken aback by the mass development of large single-family homes on large lots often with mandated large lawns, no solar, heavy electric use, and little sign of thinking about the future.

Reading many articles, Idaho does seem to be more conservation oriented, and yet with a date of having all clean energy by 2045 they are still behind Oregon, with our goal for clean energy of 2040. Much of what Idaho is counting on is using our cleaner electric sources by putting a 300-mile power line through Oregon private and public lands.

So many Oregonians have spent so much time and money fighting this proposal. In my opinion, Idaho has been so behind in protecting the environment that they have not earned any right to sabotage Oregon and so many special areas close to La Grande.

We are now, with good reason, subject to having our properties designated high risk for fire, which could impact insurance costs. Some of the B2H line construction and equipment will be in hard-to-access forested areas. Will it impact fire ratings? Do we really need another higher risk project tearing up our state mostly for Idaho's benefit and little that helps Oregon? Not in my opinion.

Maxine Hines
La Grande

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