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Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Extension transforms itself for the 21st century

The recession that dealt a body blow to the U.S. economy left its mark on the budgets of land grant universities and state and federal government research programs. Extension programs did not escape.

Extension administrators across the nation could have tried to maintain current programs, trimming their budgets and hoping that funding would return when the economy recovered.

Or they could reinvent the Extension Service for the 21st century, replacing an outdated model that had been in place for decades and was reaching the end

of its useful life.

Most administrators chose the latter. At Washington State University, for example, the Extension Service has undertaken an intensive process that has generated high-tech, web-based tools that help the state's farmers make the tough decisions. Using WSU Extension tools, a farmer can see how individual wheat varieties performed in various parts of the state, when to irrigate their crops and when to expect frost. These and other features are available to every farmer.

This is not your father's Extension Service.

"County agents are a thing of

the past," WSU Extension director Rich Koenig told the Capital Press. In their place is a battalion of specialists who concentrate on high-dollar crops such as small grains, tree fruit, vegetables and grapes. Though other crops are still supported, it is with fewer people.

Budget cuts were the driving force of the changes, but they most likely would have happened anyway. Times change, and so does technology. With the Internet and other high-tech tools available, the old Extension model would have become outdated no matter what happened to the budgets.

At WSU, state and county contributions to Extension shrank. To make up for the reductions, commodity groups stepped forward and provided funds to pay for the research they need to stay competitive in the world market. For example, the Washington Grain Commission and the state's tree fruit industry have directly funded tens of millions of dollars for research through the university and Extension.

Similar transformations have been taking place in Western states such as Idaho, Oregon and California, as growers have recognized the need for research on their crops and provided more

funding directly to Extension.

Now that the economy is improving, don't expect Extension to return to the old model. Because of budget cuts at the federal level and inflation and other increased costs, the overall footprint of the Extension Service has shrunk by about one-third.

Expect Extension to continue to work with farmers and ranchers to provide them with the information they need to prosper. They'll do that face-to-face, through the Internet or through crop advisers and agronomists, who will work with them to provide the most up-to-date information in a timely and useful manner.



Rik Dalvit/For the Capital Press

OUR VIEW

Ranchers can't wait for 'thousands' of wolves

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission has begun, at least tentatively, the process to remove the gray wolf from the state's endangered species list.

The state's wolf plan calls for beginning the delisting process when the state has at least four breeding pairs for three consecutive years. Oregon reached that standard at the end of 2014, when eight breeding pairs were counted. Four breeding pairs were confirmed in 2013 and six in 2012.

But ranchers who thought reaching that goal was an automatic trigger for delisting are disappointed. While the commission last month voted unanimously to start the process, it has also asked the Department of Fish and Wildlife to present it with information about delisting wolves throughout the state, delisting wolves in only the eastern part of the state, or leaving them on the endangered species list.

Ranchers, who bear much of the expense of literally holding the wolves at bay and receive only

partial compensation when they are unsuccessful, feel betrayed. While there has been coffee shop talk about taking care of predatory wolves on the sly — "shoot, shovel, shut up" — illegal takings appear to have been few and far between.

No wolves have been killed while attacking or chasing livestock in Oregon. ODFW killed four for chronic depredation on livestock. Five were illegally shot since 2000; one died when hit by a vehicle.

Officially, ranchers lost to wolves 76 sheep, 36 cattle and two goats from 2009 through 2014. Ranchers say the total is higher than confirmed because many animals just disappear. Delisting would give ranchers more latitude in protecting their animals.

"We lived up to our promise," said rancher Todd Nash, wolf committee chairman for the Oregon Cattlemen's Association. "We wholly expect the agency and this committee to live up to theirs."

But environmentalists have

different ideas, and are pushing the state to keep wolves on the endangered species list.

Most believe there are about 100 wolves in Oregon. Conservationists say there needs to be many more to protect the population from being wiped out by disease or other calamity.

Amaroq Weiss, West Coast wolf organizer with the Center for Biological Diversity, needs "on the magnitude of thousands" of wolves before they are delisted.

Really? A hundred may not be enough, but a thousand is too many.

All of God's creatures have the right to thrive, and wolves have a place in the wilds of the West.

But that doesn't mean that wolves should be allowed to make a free meal of cattle and sheep on the range, whether grazing on public or private land. And we don't think ranchers should have to wait until there are thousands of wolves lining up for dinner before the rules of engagement change.

Readers' views

No thanks to cameras for rural police

On communist day this year, May 1, the national media announced an initial \$20 million federally funded program to provide body cameras for (get this) "small and medium-sized police departments" around the nation.

Do the people remain complacent and unaware still? Can we not see and feel the tentacles of this federally spawned totalitarian power evermore enticing, gripping and

controlling our lives? If we don't see it, why do we not see it? Why do we continue so overly trusting? What is it that keeps us so glibly unconcerned amidst it all?

The point here is not so much to argue whether police body cameras should or should not be, my concern being much, much broader than that.

Please just sit up and take notice, brothers and sisters! This whole rising ambiance and culture that alleges ubiquitous "crime threats, terrorism, etc." is an evil ploy. It has been purposely created, then de-

liberately driven daily into our psyche to keep people everywhere afraid, so as to more easily lure us all into their monstrous, ever-tightening web of control.

Idahoans, in particular: At what point will you arise together and say "Enough! Back off, you lying wannabes! We neither want nor need your intrusions. If anything, we would go back — all the way back — to where a simple kindly cop walked his neighborhood, sometimes even with little children hanging on his leg." That "Norman Rockwell" scene used to suffice for America, and can suffice

still, if only all peace-loving (and peace-demanding) locals will insist upon it. Let us simply refuse to buy into their manufactured "terror threat" lie.

I might add that if today's police officers were trained to look and act like true peace officers, far fewer cameras would be needed, for far fewer incidences needing ever camera recording would arise.

Cameras for huge city areas? Maybe. For our small, peaceful, rural towns? No, thank you!

Carol Asher
Kamiah, Idaho

An overlooked strategy to obtain water

By BRUCE COLBERT
For the Capital Press

Guest
comment
Bruce Colbert



Farmers and other water users can adopt a proven strategy to obtain a reliable water supply. This overlooked strategy was developed by environmentalists in the 1980s.

Environmentalists in Congress in 1980 were in trouble, and therefore their programs were in trouble. Environmentalists realized that if they could develop a strategy to select legislators, they would have an easier time winning battles in Congress. Environmentalists could participate at the beginning of the process of creating law.

Environmentalists decided that half measures were insufficient. In 1982, one organization endorsed 140 candidates for the House and the Senate, raised a quarter of a million dollars for their campaigns, and environmentalists worked on campaigns. Around three-quarters of their candidates won. Politicians increasingly came to value the endorsement of environmentalists. Laws created federal agencies that provided jobs for environmentalists. Vigilant environmentalists made sure that the laws were subsequently enforced. Now, environmentalists use political campaigns, laws, lobbying and litigation as effective tools to achieve their goals.

The composition of the Legislature represents those who take politics seriously.

Like the environmentalists in Congress in 1980, farmers today are in trouble, and their rights are in trouble. Farmers' strengths of: optimism, thrift and independent self-reliance are being used against them by shrewd environmentalists, who take advantage of farmers' corresponding reluctances to: acknowledge the impacts of environmental programs, spend money on politics, and work together as a group.

Yet, the \$43 billion California agriculture industry, and the \$395 billion U.S. agriculture industry, are far greater than the \$7.5 billion U.S. environmental industry. Farmers ought to realize their strength, and not sell themselves short. Farmers can use the environmentalists' strategy for themselves, and can be just as successful.

Farmers and other water users following this strategy would spend money on political campaigns to elect legislators who would create laws to represent water users' interests. Then federal judges would be tasked with upholding laws favorable to water users and to people in general.

The money being spent on

appeasing environmentalists could go a long way politically. The average winner in a U.S. Senate race spent \$10.2 million in 2012; the average winner in a U.S. House race spent \$1.5 million. If the \$240 million spent on the Bay Delta Conservation Plan had been spent politically, water restrictions may have been eased.

Environmental extremists are anti-human and anti-civilization. "The world has cancer and the cancer is man," cites the Club of Rome. The federal Endangered Species Act is enforced "whatever the cost," favoring fish over people, in order to eliminate the water needed for growth, causing human suffering. The environment is now using 48 percent of California's dedicated water supply. Reservoirs are being drained for fish. Farmers must act before their wells are pumping dust.

Farmers, ranchers, homebuilders and other industries must move beyond cronyism, or seeing one another as competitors; we must unite to defend civilization itself. When farmers apply the environmentalists' strategy, then farmers will develop clout in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., and water policies will change.

A highly effective means to join together and pool financial resources politically is a Super PAC — a type of 527 group. Super PACs, officially known as "independent expenditure-only committees," may raise unlimited sums of money from corporations, unions, associations and individuals, and may engage in unlimited political spending.

As Ronald Reagan said, "It all comes down to this basic premise: If you lose your economic freedom, you lose your political freedom and, in fact, all freedom. Freedom is something that cannot be passed on genetically. It is never more than one generation away from extinction. Every generation has to learn how to protect and defend it."

Bruce Colbert, AICP, is executive director of the Property Owners Association of Riverside County, Calif. The association is a nonprofit, public policy research, lobbying and educational organization, formed in 1983, to protect the interests and private property rights of landowners in the formation and implementation of public policies.

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