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Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Wyden, Brown do 'The Sidestep' on monument

We understand the plight of some Oregon politicians when it comes to the national monument proposed for 2.5 million acres in Malheur County.

We understand that Sen. Ron Wyden and Gov. Kate Brown identify most with Portland and Eugene.

We understand that in the political game there is no need to give a straight answer to any question that offers them no benefit.

But still....

There was a time when even politicians stood for something. That's how they were elected. They would say what they thought about a variety of issues important

to the electorate, which in turn would decide whether to hire them as their representatives.

Oregon politics, however, appears to have mutated into a muddle of ambiguity. This is a world where there are no direct answers, and a "yes" or "no" question is answered with a monologue that dodges the question.

In the case of the Owyhee Canyonlands national monument proposal in Malheur County, Wyden was recently asked whether he supports it. The senator assured those at an Eastern Oregon town hall meeting he had told the Obama administration that area residents oppose it.

This is interesting in itself,

because Interior Secretary Sally Jewell told a U.S. House committee on March 1 that she was unaware of any active plan in the administration to designate the Owyhee Canyonlands national monument.

If there are no plans for the monument, why is the administration still talking about it?

Wyden was asked whether he supported the proposal.

Wyden said it's his duty to respect how Oregon residents vote on issues. Malheur County residents voted 9-1 against the monument in a special election in March. He also said that while Malheur County residents have voted on the issue, the rest of

Oregon has not.

"I didn't hear an answer," Malheur County Farm Bureau President Jeana Hall told the Capital Press. "I think I heard a 'maybe' somewhere in there."

Similarly, Brown, who like Wyden is in the midst of an election campaign, has been equally mealy-mouthed.

"While this is ultimately a federal decision, I have heard from many Oregonians with strong views about the Owyhee," she said. "There's agreement as to the beauty and uniqueness of the Canyonlands and disagreement over whether a monument designation can best ensure those characteristics will be enjoyed

for future generations. I have communicated those viewpoints to federal administration officials and will be closely following this issue in the months ahead."

It appears to us that Oregon's "leaders" have decided it's too risky to lead.

The political documentary film "Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" includes a song called "The Sidestep," which is sung by the fictional governor of Texas. The chorus goes like this: "Ooh, I love to dance a little sidestep, now they see me now they don't. I've come and gone and, ooh I love to sweep around the wide step, cut a little swathe and lead the people on."

It's a song all too familiar to a lot of Oregonians.

OUR VIEW



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson File

Neither Trump nor Clinton offer Plan B on TPP

Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are running for president. Their expressed positions on issues, and the positions of their respective party platforms, are easily distinguishable.

Except for trade, where there's not much difference between Republican or Democrat standard bearers. If farmers and ranchers were to decide on this issue alone, they would have a hard time picking the candidate who best represents their interests.

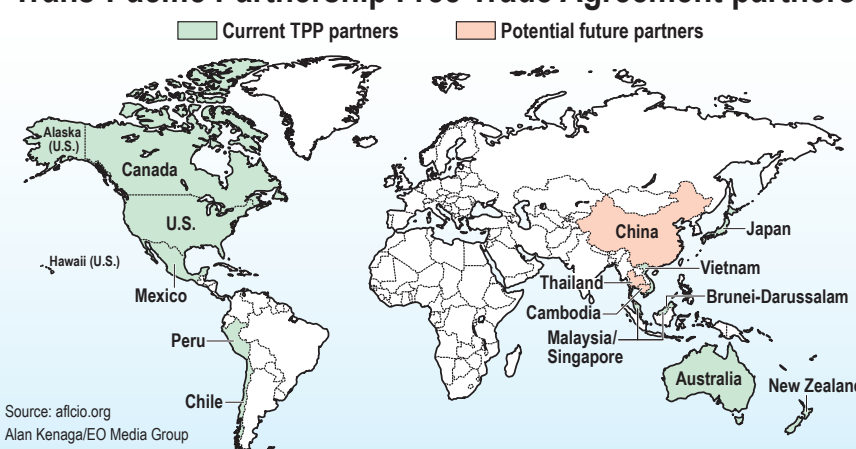
Trade is the lifeblood of agriculture in the Northwest and California. Everything from apples to nuts is dependent on trade. Eighty percent of the wheat grown in the Northwest is bound for Asian markets. Without access to those markets, producers are finished.

Both sides are for trade — fair trade. And by that they mean trade that doesn't cheat middle class Americans out of good-paying jobs. Democrats are also concerned with foreign labor standards and environmental regulation. Republicans want our partners to respect American intellectual property and stop manipulating their currencies.

By those standards, they all say, many previous deals have been very bad. And the recently submitted Trans-Pacific Partnership — a 12-nation, 6,000-page behemoth awaiting a vote in Congress — could be the worst.

Clinton once called TPP the "gold standard" of trade deals, but last fall after the deal was written Clinton said it didn't meet her standard. Sen. Tim Kaine, her running mate, was for it as recently as a week before being nominated for the vice president slot, when he promptly came out against the pact.

Trans-Pacific Partnership Free Trade Agreement partners



Courtesy of Zachary Moskow, wikipedia.org
Clinton speaks at an event in Philadelphia on April 20. **TOP PHOTO:** The Port of Seattle is shown. Neither Republican Donald Trump nor Democrat Hillary Clinton support the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a 12-nation trade treaty.

Trump has always been against TPP, calling it "terrible for America." Though China isn't a party to TPP, Trump says it gives China opportunities to get in "through the back door." As governor of Indiana and a congressman before that, Mike Pence, Trump's running mate, has long supported multi-nation trade deals — including TPP. He too underwent a post-convention conversion.

There have been many trade deals over the years. Some of them were good, some of them bad. Even in the

best, someone in the United States loses as other of their countrymen win.

And it is thus with the TPP. In granting access to its market to our farmers, Vietnam will expect more favorable terms for its manufactured goods here. What country would make a deal in which it received nothing in exchange for its concessions?

Without TPP, what's Plan B? Both Clinton and Trump say they'll reopen the negotiations on TPP and other pacts and get a better deal for America. Maybe, but those kinds of negotiations take time. In the meantime, some of our toughest competitors could get a toehold in some of our best markets in Asia.

Supporters of TPP, including President Obama, are still pushing for a vote on the deal — perhaps after the election and before the inauguration, when everyone will be protected from the voters.

That's a little sleazy. But, better to have a deal in hand for the next president to tweak than allow our competitors months — and potentially years — to exploit our lack of favored standing with established customers.

Letters policy

Write to us: Capital Press welcomes letters to the editor on issues of interest to farmers, ranchers and the agribusiness community.

Letters policy: Please limit letters to 300 words and include your home address and a daytime telephone number with your submission. Longer pieces, 500-750 words, may be considered as guest

commentary pieces for use on the opinion pages. Guest commentary submissions should also include a photograph of the author.

Send letters via email to opinions@capitalpress.com. Emailed letters are preferred and require less time to process, which could result in quicker publication. Letters also may be sent to P.O. Box 2048, Salem, OR 97308; or by fax to 503-370-4383.

Farmland open houses were 'disingenuous'

By **JIM BERNARD**
For the Capital Press

Guest comment
Jim Bernard



It's worse than "disingenuous."

That's the word used in a story by a local newspaper about the so-called public process the county engaged in around three recent open houses.

The subjects: changing the designation of properties from rural reserves to an undesignated status to allow them to be developed — making them far more valuable in the process.

The three properties at the heart of this effort include Langdon Farms south of the Willamette River owned by the Maletis Brothers, Springwater Road owned by Terry Emmert, and another 400 acres east of Canby, Ore.

Despite the major impact on cities and residents, the three public open houses for citizens were scheduled the week before the Fourth of July holiday with short notice. Only property owners within 250 feet of the proposed study area were notified.

Affected cities, mayors, Community Participation Organizations and hamlets all say they were not notified. They were outraged, and I agree with them.

Thanks to the quick actions by Friends of French Prairie and other community organizations in Wilsonville, approximately 400 people attended the three open houses. Only one person spoke in support of this proposal, Chris Maletis.

That shouldn't be a surprise. Thousands of citizens participated in the Urban/Rural Reserves process to preserve foundation farmland, prevent urban sprawl and give certainty to farmers and urban developers.

After years of court challenges, the court ruled that areas south of the Willamette River were properly designated as foundation farmland.

Instead of accepting the court's and the public's verdict, Clackamas County Chair John Ludlow and commissioners Tootie Smith and Paul Savas

voted to spend \$200,000 to study employment lands in areas that have already been decided — and that would benefit only a few property owners.

At the same time, those same property owners have donated tens of thousands of dollars to the campaigns of the chair and those commissioners.

These properties are in the heart of agricultural land and have been rejected as urban land in all previous public processes. And for good reason: Our citizens need jobs close to their communities where services already exist; not on virgin farmland down in the Willamette Valley, where communities do not have the infrastructure to support these industrial uses — and taxpayers would be on the hook for paying for them.

Why should this matter to all Clackamas County citizens? The Clackamas County Commission adopted five strategic priorities in Performance Clackamas. Chief among these was: "Build Public Trust Through Good Governance." This process does exactly the opposite.

I personally attended two of the three open houses. No one I spoke with received notice from the county nor did I encounter even a single individual that supported the proposal. There was a work session scheduled on this subject on Aug. 3.

A vote is not usually called during a work session, but there is nothing preventing that from happening then or at any other time if a majority of commissioners decides otherwise.

That must not happen.

Instead, we should restore the integrity of a process that has raised far too many questions — and far too few answers about who the county commission is truly serving.

Jim Bernard is a Clackamas County, Ore., commissioner.

Readers' views

Letter writer critical of candidates

Mike Letia, a Yakima County commissioner, and U.S. Rep. Dan Newhouse have made the Yakima Valley the "toilet bowl" of the state.

Both Newhouse and Letia have supported using toxic sewage sludge on food products in the Yakima Valley.

Letia, by being on the Yakima Health District bringing in untested sludge from over 27 locations. Newhouse by promoting sludge use in his farming community.

The state Department of

Ecology has not updated testing on sludge for 10 years, yet these two have chased the dollar instead of protecting public health. Over 200 nitrates were found in wells next to dairies, yet Newhouse supports not holding polluters accountable for their manure.

Will anyone care when there is no more clean water in the valley? The City of Mabton, Outlook School, private wells have been polluted.

Both candidates pollute that taxpayers pay for the pollution with their health and their pockets. Neither candidate deserves to be in office.

Jan Whitefoot Harrah, Wash.