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Opinion

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OUR VIEW

File predator study under 'Junk Science'

Straight from the Department of Wishful Thinking comes a new study that offers the theory that predators are good for people.

Why? Because they eat deer, and a deer that's been eaten can't jump in front of a car and cause a wreck.

Such tortured logic is popular these days, as some researchers desperately try to paint a "Happy Face" on even the most serious problems.

In this case, the problems are cougars and wolves. They have taken up residence in many parts of the West and commenced to eating whatever other critters are around.

Because they reside at the top of the food chain, they eat just about anything that moves. Mice,

squirrels, deer — all are on the menu. So are sheep and cattle.

In the recent "Predators Are Our Friends" study, researchers wanted to prove that having cougars and wolves around isn't all bad. In fact, these predators do good by eating those pesky deer that station themselves along roads at night waiting for a car to jump at.

There is no argument that deer are rural traffic hazards, especially during rut, when the males go looking for love in all the wrong places.

Some years ago, a particularly amorous deer saw his reflection in the plate glass window of a Stayton, Ore., restaurant. He crashed through the window and slid across the floor. The impact broke the jaw of a customer

who had been sitting at a table drinking coffee.

Others tell the story of a deer that charged the side of a minivan that had stopped on the road to avoid hitting him.

In those cases, the deer would have been much better off staying in the woods.

Or better yet, hunters should be allowed to thin the ranks of cougars, wolves, deer — and elk, too, for that matter. We would prefer a regulated hunting season over an unregulated population of predators tearing through ranchers' livestock and deer.

To make the case that any predator that kills a deer — unless it was getting ready to jump through a restaurant window — is a benefit to mankind is a stretch.

Many humans have problems with cougars and wolves. They are called ranchers, and they have to clean up the mess after a cougar or wolf has torn a sheep or cow to shreds. They also pay for the honor by losing valuable members of their flocks or herds. Predators cost Western ranchers many thousands of dollars each year.

We admire the efforts of the researchers who attempted to create a happy story about predators.

But the reality remains that ranchers continue to have many problems with predators, including cougars and wolves. A well-regulated hunt would go a long way toward solving those problems.



OUR VIEW



Courtesy of Save Family Farming

An advertising sign on a Whatcom County, Wash., transit bus promotes an Environmental Protection Agency-funded campaign to get the state Legislature to mandate 100-foot buffers between all farm fields and waterways. The sign shows cows standing in a stream that was not in or near Washington state.

EPA could have been more forceful in suggesting moderate course

And now, a few good words about the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Really.

Regular readers may well be trying to detect a cool breeze emanating from the nether regions. While we have no evidence of any significant change in those environs, we can document that the EPA tried to steer the people behind the What's Upstream campaign in Washington state on a more realistic course.

The Swinomish Indian tribe used an EPA grant to contract with Strategies 360 to survey voter attitudes and "create media pieces" for the What's Upstream advocacy campaign. The campaign's goal was to convince Washingtonians to press for increased regulation to protect their water.

But first, the campaign's backers had to convince Washingtonians that there was a problem with their water. Strategies 360 noted to the tribe and several allied environmental groups that water quality wasn't a top-of-mind problem for people in the state. "There is no clearly defined problem in people's minds, as most do not perceive a problem with

existing water quality."

So they needed to trump up a problem, and they needed a fall guy. To keep it simple, they made farmers the clearly defined cause of the problem and posted billboards and a website featuring pictures of cows standing in a creek. It turns out they were not Washington cows standing in Washington streams, but convincing nonetheless. Strategies 360 developed a marketing plan to build public support for a "regulatory remedy" — mandatory 100-foot buffers between farm fields and waterways.

Despite what EPA officials suggested earlier this year when critics of the campaign started to complain, the agency was in the loop from the get-go. "The EPA was part of every step," Jeff Reading, Strategies 360's vice president of communications, said. "The EPA was very intimately involved as the campaign emerged."

But not entirely happy with what was going on.

Records obtained by Capital Press reporter Don Jenkins through the Freedom of Information Act, mostly emails between the EPA

and the fisheries commission, show EPA officials were concerned that What's Upstream was too focused on agriculture and regulations, rather than taking a broader view of pollution sources in Puget Sound and the possibility of voluntary actions.

The EPA thought the campaign should draw attention to the many sources of water pollution. It worried the campaign conflicted with another effort the agency funded to foster collaboration between stakeholders. It rejected the campaign's assertion that agriculture is unregulated.

In short, the EPA tried to be the voice, albeit a passive voice, of moderation and reason. Who would have thought?

The tribe and its allies didn't listen, and EPA didn't pull the plug on the \$650,000 venture until Congress took notice of a Capital Press story exposing the campaign.

The EPA could have been more forceful in its objections. Suspected polluters know the EPA can be far more direct when it suits its purpose.

Nonetheless, we appreciate the difficulty of standing up to one's friends.

A 'Better Way' forward for Oregon and America

By GREG WALDEN
For the Capital Press

Guest comment
Rep. Greg Walden



As I listen to people during meetings throughout our state (I recently held my 51st town hall since the beginning of last year), Oregonians too often voice the same concerns: an overreaching federal government that ignores our pleas, overregulates our lives and depresses job growth in our communities.

That's why I put forward legislation that positively addresses the problems we face. Seven of my proposals have passed the U.S. House so far this term — most with unanimous support — including my bills to help bring commercial air service back to Klamath Falls, provide needed funding for bridges in the Columbia Gorge and to improve rural internet service for consumers.

Within the past year, Congress has given law enforcement and drug prevention advocates new tools to help fight addiction in our communities. We've passed plans to help veterans get better health care in the communities where they live. Seniors no longer face a planned drastic spike in Medicare premiums or a cut for Social Security disability recipients. A long-term transportation funding plan and a major education reform proposal have also become law.

While I'm proud of these successes, there is still much to be done to push back against an overreaching federal government. That's why House Republicans have proposed a new agenda — called "A Better Way" — to offer solutions to some of the biggest challenges we face in Oregon and America. I encourage you to go read it yourself on my website: www.walden.house.gov/abetterway. Some highlights of our plan include:

Growing jobs and the economy: Too many small businesses, farmers, and ranchers in Oregon face overbearing federal regulations that are often written by agencies far away in Washington, D.C. Last year alone, federal regulations cost the national economy about \$1.89 trillion in lost growth and productivity.

Our plan makes sure the regulatory regime works for us — not against us. For instance, we'd require that the Congress, accountable to the people, approve all major regulations. Our plan would also help boost affordable, reliable energy and preserve internet innovation so that

jobs can flourish.

Combating poverty: Fifty years ago, the U.S. government launched the "War on Poverty." American taxpayers have invested \$22 trillion since then, yet you are just as likely to stay poor if you were born poor today as you were then. And according to a state report last year, Oregon's poverty rate is higher than the national average (and the rate is even higher in many rural counties).

The current system too often replaces work, instead of encouraging it. There's a better way to help the over 46 million Americans who are trapped in a cycle of poverty. Our plan offers solutions to expand opportunity and reward work.

Implementing real health reform: The new health care law, known as Obamacare, is driving up insurance costs and reducing choices for too many Oregonians. The state wasted hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars on Cover Oregon and now is mired in costly litigation.

Meanwhile, people are left to cope with more insurers leaving the market, and two new health "co-ops" set up by the law have already folded.

There's a better way to give everyone access to quality, affordable health care. Our plan would replace Obamacare with a new one that provides consumers more choices, lowers costs, focuses on curing deadly diseases like cancer, and strengthens and preserves Medicare.

Our "Better Way" plan upholds our constitution rights and makes government more accountable and transparent to the people. We have ideas to boost our national security, combat terrorism, and ensure our troops and veterans have what they need. And we propose reforming the nation's tax code to make it simpler and fairer for Oregon families and small businesses.

I'd encourage you to go read the entire plan, with hundreds of ideas to solve problems in our communities, on my website. There, you can let me know what you think of these ideas or offer some of your own. Together, there's a better way to get Oregon and America back on track.

Rep. Greg Walden represents Oregon's second congressional district, which covers 20 counties in southern, central and eastern Oregon.

Readers' views

Pastures should be part of organic farming

The editorial "Proposed organic livestock rules must be rewritten" (Capital Press

July 29) misses one important aspect of livestock care.

From an organic point of view, a healthy animal must get regular exercise and sunshine. An animal raised in confinement is not really of organic quality, regard-

less of the feed the animal receives.

As an organic farmer and a mostly organic food buyer and consumer, I prefer conventionally raised beef grown on pasture or forage to an organically fed beef

raised in confinement.

Open pasture is a critical part of natural farming, and should be a requirement for organic designation.

*Jonathan Spero
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