

Editorials are written by or approved by members of the Capital Press Editorial Board.

All other commentary pieces are the opinions of the authors but not necessarily this newspaper.

Opinion

Editorial Board

Publisher
John Perry
opinions@capitalpress.com

Editor
Joe Beach
Online: www.capitalpress.com/opinion

Managing Editor
Carl Sampson

OUR VIEW

Oregon's wetlands system full of surprises

Jesse Bounds thought the worst was over after a fire destroyed two barns, his machinery and \$500,000 worth of straw last summer. In all, it was a loss of about \$1 million.

Then he tried to rebuild, and found his troubles had only begun. He dealt with the insurance company and got the necessary county building permits. But then a neighbor complained, and Bounds was told by the Oregon Department of State Lands that the 12 acres that had been farmed for years was actually a wetlands — a wetlands that didn't appear on the State Wetland Inventory and had gone unnoticed. A permit to mitigate the damage to the



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press File
Jesse Bounds of Junction City, Ore., was caught up in the state wetlands system when he sought to rebuild two barns after a fire.

wetlands would cost \$57,000 per acre, a \$684,000 extra bill to restore the family's livelihood.

Oregon landowners don't have a simple, reliable method to

find out whether their property is considered a wetland.

House Bill 2785 takes the narrow approach, by exempting the replacement of a farm building "destroyed by fire or other act of God" from state wetlands mitigation laws.

House Bill 2786 is more expansive, creating an exemption for any property that's not designated as a wetland under the State Wetland Inventory.

We think Bounds should be excused, and HB 2785 is clearly written to remedy his situation. Requiring mitigation of previously undeclared wetlands to restore what had been a going concern could easily put a farm out of

business. Let's give them a break.

We understand where some people might think HB 2786 goes too far, but the legislation begs a legitimate question: If wetlands are so important, why haven't they been identified and mapped?

The Department of State Lands doesn't actively seek out uncharted wetlands. Its enforcement actions are based on complaints. If neighbors hadn't complained, Bounds would have rebuilt blissfully unaware of his real trouble.

There is no definitive list for county building officials to consult. If a parcel is on the State Wetland Inventory it's a wetland, but if it's not it still could be?

And determining whether a piece of ground is a wetland isn't as easy as it might sound. In many cases, a wetland can be bone dry and is only identified by expensive soil tests. That's why DSL operates on a complaint basis, and then places the onus on the property owner to prove the land is not a wetland. It's an insidious system.

It seems an understatement that this system adds a certain amount of uncertainty to the unsuspecting property owner. It's a mess the state needs to fix so that there are no questions, no surprises.

Until then, Oregon property owners are advised to keep peace with their neighbors.

OUR VIEW



THE FACE OF STARVATION

U.S. has an obligation to do more in fight against hunger

This is the face of hunger. It's hard to look at, yet if you have a heart you should not be able to look away.

The little boy in the photo, Udai Faisal, died last year, and 1.4 million other children like him in far-away places such as Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria face the same awful fate. Some 20.4 million people are caught up in famine across the region.

They need our help. We know the reasons — war, drought, political corruption — but none of the victims were at fault.

Last week, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres held out his hand and asked for help. "We are already facing a tragedy; we must avoid it becoming a catastrophe," he said at a press conference. He said the U.N. needs \$4.4 billion by the end of March to avoid that catastrophe. He has received \$90 million.

In Ethiopia alone, 10.2 million people are in need and about 2.1 million are acutely malnourished, Challiss McDonough, a spokeswoman for the World Food Program, told the Los Angeles Times. She estimates her nonprofit has only 5 percent of the resources it needs in that nation alone.

The U.N. and charities such as the World Food Program are fighting a losing battle. They need food, and they need it now, to rescue men, women and children whose only mistake was to live in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The United States of America is uniquely able to step forward and help.

The U.S. already buys some food for overseas aid programs, but it needs to do more. According to USAID, the federal agency that provides food aid, 795 million people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger. Although

We have been at war 15 years. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we have sent our young men or women into harm's way and spent more than \$4 trillion. We can certainly afford to spend a tiny fraction of that to save millions of lives.

USAID already sends \$2.5 billion in food aid to those in need, we as a nation can and should do more.

It's our obligation to humanity. We live in a land of plenty. Silos across the U.S. are bulging with excess wheat. According to the USDA, 2.07 billion bushels of wheat were in storage as of December. Last year, U.S. farmers grew 2.3 billion bushels.

The huge stockpile drags on wheat prices, which continue to hover at or below farmers' cost of production, threatening their livelihoods and well-being. Economists estimate that if nothing changes, wheat prices will remain low for up to five years.

In a silo, that wheat is helping no one.

If the U.S. Congress and the Trump administration were to step forward, buy that wheat and send it to sub-Saharan Africa and other corners of the world gripped by hunger, it will

save millions of lives.

Congress and the White House need to recognize our nation's obligation to help the millions of people who are facing starvation. There is nothing we'd rather see than U.S. Marines delivering shiploads of wheat directly to the hungry people of sub-Saharan Africa and Yemen. On each bag should be printed a U.S. flag and the words: "From the People of the United States of America."

An additional outcome of feeding people is they will ultimately be able to fend for themselves and grow their own food, stemming the massive number of refugees flooding neighboring countries and the rest of the world.

We have been at war 15 years. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we have sent our young men or women into harm's way and spent more than \$4 trillion. We can certainly afford to spend a tiny fraction of that to save millions of lives.

Nobody, regardless of race or religion, deserves to die of malnutrition, especially when we have the food and the resources readily available to help them get through this crisis.

Our hope is that Congress and President Trump will work together to provide more food aid for those in need.

It's the right thing to do, but it needs to be done now. Every minute, and every life, counts.

Readers' views

Flood nonsense in Klamath area

On Feb. 8, the Oregon Water Resources Department, OWRD, issued a post card to our farm/ranch lifting water restriction in areas of the Upper Klamath Basin.

The irony of this notice is so obvious. The rivers are at flood stage or very near it, and OWRD finally lifts the Tribal Call on the water.

As the notice indicates, "This applies to all uses on the listed water right, including stock water, and domestic." This includes surface water, (rivers, creeks and springs), and ground water (wells). Most all of the rights list irrigation as a listed use.

I guess this means that those affected are now allowed to also irrigate their crops.

In other words, irrigators, go forward, start your pumps and irrigate your crops, that is, if you can find them under all the flood water. Timing is everything.

This is further evidence of how one sided and damaging the Klamath Adjudication currently is.

The local court still has the final say whether the state's "administrative law judge" was correct in setting such high, required in-stream flows. (The administrative law judge is not in fact a "real" judge.)

Even more recently, a judge ordered the Bureau of Reclamation to "flush" additional amounts of water out of Klamath Lake and down the Klamath River to help coho salmon. This was being implemented as some downstream roads were already under water. At the last minute, this amount of extra water was reduced, only because of phone calls from downstream residents and representatives from Congressman Doug LaMalfa's office.

This example is just another case that defies all logic. A single judge and our federal government send extra water down the Klamath River for fish in the middle of a flood event. You would certainly think a flood event would contain enough water for any fish needs, including flush or pulse flows.

It is absolutely necessary that logic and true science drive the decisions critical to the survival of our local economies.

Tom Mallams
Beatty, Ore.

Keep up the good work, Capital Press

Thanks for printing Barry Flinchbaugh's piece (Trump a Mixed Bag for Ag) as a response to Rebecca Lampman's letter (Read-

ers' Views, Feb 17).

I agree with both about labor, trade impacting ag and share concerns that the new administration's policies may not align with agriculture's needs. During the campaign the administration was very clear about what it wished to accomplish. So it is ironic that agriculture, which voted strongly for this administration, is having second thoughts.

In the Feb 17 issue of the Capital Press, I learned that the U.S. Department of Labor estimates 70 percent of agricultural laborers in the U.S. are illegal. Wow! Ag could be seriously hurt by immigration policy! But that statistic, 70 percent, speaks to what the Capital Press provides to the agricultural community, namely knowledge.

So keep up the good work bringing the agricultural news to us. It is our job, the reader's job, to extract what we find meaningful. We need that knowledge, unbiased facts, to make informed decisions.

So keep it coming, guys. And thank you!

David Duncan
Mount Angel, Ore.

Anti-GMO commentary reveals double standard

The guest commentary by Patricia Michl ("Studies cast doubt on GMO food" 2/10/2017) exposes the double standard that activists continue to use in arguments against good science and research.

Michl states, "... that GMO research results from any university accepting bio-corporate money are suspect. Corporations with a stake in biotechnology pour copious amounts of money into university programs."

What the author fails to realize is that without corporate grants for research, many universities would not sustain their research programs, even to the benefit of activist causes, which many universities openly support.

And, conversely, the author's statement also implies that any money for research that comes from any anti-GMO activist organization is untainted.

This is at best a double standard, and many in farming and ranching would argue the same point about activist organization research dollars being suspect in a similar manner.

Michl spews the same rhetoric that all activists against GMOs spew, in that only their research is valuable and should be treated as gospel.

Norm Groot
Executive Director
Monterey Farm Bureau
Salinas Calif.