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# Opinion

## Editorial Board

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## OUR VIEW

# Farmers must take their message to the public

At least a couple of times a year, one group or another reaches out to the Capital Press seeking advice on how to get their message about agriculture to consumers in urban markets.

The conversation takes a predictable course.

“There’s so much misinformation on the internet. People in the city don’t understand farming (ranching, GMOs, dairies, pesticides, wolves, commodity prices, trade, etc). How can we get the facts and our perspective to city media outlets?”

It’s an age-old question.

You can try to get an op-ed piece printed in the Oregonian or



Capital Press File

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the Seattle Times and you might make some headway. You could go directly to the online sites spreading misinformation and

challenge them.

But farmers and ranchers really can’t compete with bomb throwers on the comment sections

of social media posts or of stories on news websites.

Those probably aren’t the people agriculture needs to reach anyway. Ag can’t change the minds of activists, but it can engage reasonable people who can be swayed by the facts.

The best way for ag groups to get their message to nonfarmers is to go directly to those consumers, either online or in person. And because facts only go so far, the best way to present the message is to put a human face on it.

There are any number of examples of farmers and ranchers using personal blogs, YouTube and Facebook to refute common misconceptions about agriculture.

An Oregon dairy farmer in Tillamook County, for example, does an excellent job on Facebook teaching people about his industry. A recent video post discussed the feedstuffs and nutrition supplements he feeds his herd.

We think ag groups should work to get farmers and ranchers in front of the urban civic and church groups that are always looking for a lunch or dinner speaker. These are receptive audiences whose perceptions can be changed.

Closing the rural-urban divide and challenging the misinformation about agriculture found on the internet requires a constant effort. Retail politics win campaigns.

## OUR VIEW

# No protection needed for wolves

What would you do? Put yourself in the boots of the Oregon hunter who says he was attacked by a wolf.

“I screamed, got it in my (scope) crosshairs, saw fur and pulled the trigger,” Brian Scott of Clackamas, Ore., told our reporter, Eric Mortenson.

Though his story has been doubted by some and he has been criticized by the trolls on social media, Scott appears to have done the right thing. With a wolf running toward him and at least two others flanking him, he protected himself.

Some experts insist that wolves are shy little things that avoid people, but hunters often mask their scent using pine boughs to avoid detection by elk. Some hunters also use a cow call or rub antlers on trees to attract bull elk. The wolf probably thought it was going to have elk for lunch.

Those or other factors might have led the wolf to charge Scott on that

fateful day in Eastern Oregon.

We refuse to condemn a man for protecting himself against a charging predator. He broke no laws. Though unusual, wolves have killed people in the past, and no one on any side of the debate wants to see that happen.

By our lights, he did everything right, including calling the authorities and reporting the incident.

We’re a bit less sympathetic toward whoever has been shooting wolves in southern Oregon. Three of the protected animals have been killed in that part of the state, a violation of state and federal law.

We did not write the law, nor do we agree that wolves should be a protected species. But to blatantly violate the law only bolsters wolf advocates’ arguments for protecting the animals.

Wolves are thriving in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and other states — even California. The idea that any resources or

protections are required to help those populations of apex predators spread borders on laughable.

We’ve said before in this space that ranchers need protection from wolves, not the other way around.

What is needed is for our elected members of Congress to get off their rear ends and lift the protection for wolves in the West. There are plenty of wolves in this part of the country — more than 1,000 in Oregon, Washington and Idaho alone. Wildlife managers readily acknowledge that their counts are low-ball estimates, since wolves seem to be popping up unannounced all over the region.

That includes the pack that managers didn’t know about that attacked the hunter in Eastern Oregon.

It’s time to end the protections for wolves as they continue to multiply and spread across the region without any help from wildlife managers.

# Why I testified: H.R. 3144 ‘just makes sense’

By BETH LOONEY  
For the Capital Press

Guest  
comment  
Beth Looney



A few weeks ago, on a Thursday morning in our nation’s capital, I took my seat in front of a microphone to face members of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources’ Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans. I had traveled from Portland, Ore., to Washington, D.C., to make sure that the voices of my distribution cooperative members, and public power throughout the Northwest, were heard on a critical piece of federal legislation now before Congress.

The bill, H.R. 3144, places a temporary time-out on litigation brought by plaintiff groups with an agenda. It has bipartisan support from Northwest Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash.; Jaime Herrera Beutler, R-Wash.; Dan Newhouse, R-Wash.; Kurt Schrader, D-Ore.; and Greg Walden, R-Ore, notable in our polarized political times.

With the proposal gaining traction in Congress, anti-hydropower groups have been unfairly criticizing the legislation for taking the issue of how to balance hydropower and salmon protection “out of the judge’s hands.” I don’t agree, and I urge you to consider this important bill in a more accurate light.

## What it would do

Yes, the bill would hit the pause button on litigation — but only until the same court’s earlier order, to conduct a comprehensive National Environmental Policy Act review of all facets of the federal hydrosystem, is complete.

Moreover, the bill would not “overturn” any directive yet issued by U.S. District Judge Michael Simon. It only temporarily removes the matter from his courtroom, while federal agencies collect data and gather public input on the operations of the federal hydrosystem and its impacts on protected salmon — information that the judge himself has asked for.

Meanwhile, current biological measures vetted and supported by federal scientists in two consecutive administrations (the George W. Bush and Obama administrations) would remain in place to protect salmon in the Columbia and Snake rivers.

I went to D.C. to tell Congress that H.R. 3144 is a necessary interim solution that just makes sense — for salmon, for families and businesses across the Northwest, and especially for PNGC’s 200,000 member homes, farms and businesses, including many in rural communities.

## Rising costs

Currently, 13 Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead species are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Driven by these listings, Bonneville Power Administra-

tion utility ratepayers fund the largest mitigation program for endangered species in the nation.

Already, these fish and wildlife costs make up about a third of BPA’s total cost of power. In fiscal year 2016, that came to roughly \$622 million. For just one year. Those steep costs aren’t passed on to U.S. taxpayers, I reminded the subcommittee. Instead, they are paid by utility customers, including my customers, across the Northwest.

About 80 percent of PNGC’s power supply comes from Bonneville. The rates we pay for BPA power are rising steadily and unsustainably, tied in large part to the constant litigation against the hydrosystem.

Now, yet again, due to ongoing lawsuits, Judge Simon is likely to order increased spill over the dams for the 2018 salmon migration season. This spill experiment could cost Bonneville customers another 2 percent rate increase, on top of a 5.4 percent increase that took effect several weeks ago and the 30 percent increase marched in over the past several years.

As I told members of Congress in Washington, D.C., PNGC values the clean, carbon-free, flexible hydropower that Bonneville provides. But I have a responsibility to supply power to my members at an affordable rate, whether that comes from Bonneville or elsewhere.

## A time-out

My point to the subcommittee was this: If you care about the financial health and future of Bonneville and the important programs BPA supports, you must consider the impact of this rate trajectory on Northwest customers who have other, cheaper options for power. It’s time for a temporary time-out.

In the meantime, there are strong existing protections in place for salmon. And, as soon as the NEPA review is complete, federal agencies will be positioned to adopt a new salmon plan based on the public, transparent NEPA process and the science it yields.

That’s what this bill would allow and why I traveled across the country to endorse it on behalf of PNGC customers and Northwest RiverPartners. I hope you’ll see reasons to support it, too.

*Beth Looney is president and CEO of Portland-based PNGC Power and a board member of Northwest RiverPartners. PNGC Power is a not-for-profit, member-owned electric generation and transmission cooperative owned by 15 Northwest electric distribution cooperative utilities with service territory in seven Western states.*

# Ag can’t afford to lose out on trade

By HOPE PJESKY  
For the Capital Press

Guest  
comment  
Hope Pjesky



As a farmer, it saddens me the way anti-trade rhetoric has escalated in the media and political climate over the last few years. Overlooking the benefits, people are too often quick to write off free trade agreements. They seem to forget the basic economic principle of comparative advantage, which allows people to do what they are best at and trade with others for the goods and services they lack. When this principle is followed, everyone benefits from access to the best and most affordable products and services.

International trade is incredibly important to hundreds of thousands of American farm and ranch families, including mine. Using knowledge and innovation, American farmers and ranchers have become very efficient at growing a diverse and abundant supply of food, fiber and fuel. Our productivity provides American consumers with more nutritious

food choices, at lower prices than any other country in the world. But some of the products we take for granted in our grocery stores wouldn’t be available without trade, due to the limits of our local climates and growing seasons. For example, tropical products such as coffee, cocoa and bananas cannot be produced in the continental U.S.

American farmers and ranchers are so efficient, in part, because we specialize in growing crops and raising livestock that are best suited to our land and climate. This efficiency allows us to grow an abundance of certain agricultural products to sell to markets around the world. And that’s vital to keeping agriculture and the jobs it supports on American soil alive and well. With 95.6 percent of the world’s consumers living outside the U.S., family farmers like

me depend on international trade to make our businesses sustainable.

On our farm in Oklahoma, we produce wheat and beef for consumers in the U.S. and abroad. Our climate is challenging for growing most crops but the crop best suited to our region is hard red winter wheat, the type of wheat used in the bread that Americans eat every day. American family farmers depend on international markets to keep us in business, however, as demand is not high enough in the U.S. alone. Each year between 50 and 60 percent of the hard red winter wheat grown in the U.S. is exported to many countries around the world, including Mexico, Japan, the Philippines, China, Nigeria and South Korea.

In spite of our nation’s love affair with red meat, valuable beef would be tossed out if our farm sold only to domestic customers. Access to markets in other countries that use the cuts of beef American consumers don’t not only adds value — between \$250 and \$300 for

each calf — but also reduces food waste. For example, there isn’t much demand for beef short ribs, tongue or internal organ meat in the U.S., but in South Korea short ribs are in high demand. In Mexico, tongue tacos are a favorite, and consumers in many countries around the world welcome internal organ meats on their dinner plates. Without trade our farm couldn’t make a living just producing the beef Americans enjoy.

Next time you hear that trade is bad for American businesses, take a moment to consider the safe, affordable food you enjoy every day, and imagine for a moment what your shopping cart and dinner table might look like if a lack of trade opportunities forced American farms out of business.

*Hope Pjesky, a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation’s GO Team, blogs at hopepjesky.wordpress.com. She is a farmer/rancher in northern Oklahoma, where her family grows wheat and raises beef cattle.*