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Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Avoiding Portland traffic at all costs

It doesn’t take a traffic engineer to determine that Portland is highway-impaired. Traffic in Oregon’s largest city is slow. How slow is it? you ask.

A few years ago, the state Department of Transportation estimated that 34,600 hours a day were wasted in Portland traffic jams. That’s nearly 4 years of people’s time that was wasted each day. We’d bet the number is much larger now. And just think of what all that stalled traffic does to the climate. A car or truck stuck in Portland traffic is producing carbon dioxide but getting zero miles per gallon. By that standard alone, Portland must be a major contributor to climate change.

Portland traffic is so bad people headed for the airport often have to factor in an extra



Traffic in Portland, Ore., is a challenge for agricultural exporters that have to get containers to ports in Washington state.

hour of drive time just to avoid missing their flights.

And here’s the kicker: Portland traffic is so bad the state Legislature set aside \$25 million to help agricultural shippers in the nearby Willamette Valley

avoid it. That’s how bad Portland traffic is.

The plan is to build an “intermodal facility” somewhere in the Willamette Valley south of Portland. Trucks will haul containers full of hay and other

agricultural commodities from farms and processors to a loading terminal where the containers can be loaded onto railroad cars. From there, trains would go to ports in Tacoma or Seattle for export overseas, thus avoiding Portland traffic snarls. The Port of Portland handles only a tiny number of container ships, making the trip to Tacoma and Seattle necessary.

It should be noted that there are already three such intermodal facilities in the region — including one at the port — but all are in Portland. Trucks hauling containers to those facilities are just as likely to get caught in traffic.

The big problem is Portland traffic. If Interstates 5, 205 and 405 had adequate capacity, and if traffic not bound for Portland

could avoid its multi-lane parking lots, many problems could be solved. But, for whatever reason, that is not to be.

Having a \$25 million intermodal facility in the valley represents the next best thing for valley growers and processors who still have to get their crops and goods to ports for shipment to overseas customers.

In the running are two proposals. One would be built in Brooks, a few miles north of Salem. The other would be a repurposed papermill in Millersburg, a few miles south of Salem.

We can’t comment on the attributes of the proposals. Suffice it to say: Any option that allows shippers to avoid Portland traffic jams is well worth considering.

OUR VIEW



The Washington Department of Natural Resources helicopter crew that rescued a researcher treed by wolves in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. From left, helicopter manager Daryl Schie, crew members Matthew Harris and Jared Hess, and pilot Devin Gooch.

WDFW flubs rescue of researcher

If you knew someone’s life was in danger in the rugged forest of northern Washington, would you send a chopper to rescue them within minutes or let them wait three hours while a crew hiked to the site?

The quick rescue seems like an easy choice. Not for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Two weeks ago a seasonal Forest Service researcher — a student from Utah — was conducting a stream survey in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest when she was confronted by two wolves from the Loup Loup pack that seemed intent on making her lunch. The woman yelled, waved her arms and used bear spray before climbing a tree and radioing for help.

She was rescued by a Department of Natural Resources helicopter crew within about 45 minutes.

Reporting by our Don Jenkins shows that it almost didn’t go that way.

Despite what the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife said after the event, it was reluctant to send in the chopper because of the presence of the wolves, a federally

protected species in that part of Washington. It wanted to send an overland party — a three-hour trek.

The Department of Natural Resources pushed back and prepared to dispatch an air crew that eventually executed a swift rescue.

How could they possibly spin leaving this woman clutching a tree for dear life for three hours while wolves circled below?

Notes from a call between DNR dispatcher Jill Jones and a wildlife officer summarized WDFW’s position, and her position, shortly before the helicopter launched.

“No helicopter. Federally listed species. 3 WDFW personnel saying so,” according to DNR’s call log.

“We are more concerned for her life than the listed animal,” Jones told the wildlife officer. “He indicated that she is safe up in the tree. ... I told him that we do not know how safe she is. I don’t know how stout the tree is, and if the limbs will continue to hold her or how long she can hold on.”

Finally, at the DNR’s urging, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and

WDFW agreed to launching the air rescue.

The wolves scattered when the chopper arrived at the site about 30 minutes later. The woman was rescued and all ended well.

But it could have gone badly had WDFW been allowed to put the well-being of the wolves ahead of the student clinging to the tree.

We can’t imagine that these experts really thought through the possible consequences for the young woman had it gone wrong, or considered the potential public relations disaster this episode presented.

How could they possibly spin leaving this woman clutching a tree for dear life for three hours while wolves circled below? And what did they think the optics would be if she lost her grip or otherwise made contact before rescuers arrived?

We hope that if a similar situation presents itself that WDFW won’t hesitate to do the right thing. When wolves endanger humans, pick what’s best for the humans every time.

Readers’ views

\$1.7 million worth of counseling when a major stakeholder, Cattle Producers of Washington, walked out of the advisory group in 2015? The only solution to the wolf problem is to ship the wolves back to their natural habitat — Alaska and Canada.

Problem wolves are often targeted as uniquely destructive to cattle and other livestock. But all wolves are problem wolves. All wolves are large carnivores and must eat in order to survive and all wolves will seek out the weakest prey — livestock —

which are often fenced, innately slow and no match for these predators. And humans hiking in the mountains without weapons are no match for these predators either.

No amount of counseling, collaborating and advising will solve this problem.

It’s time to quit playing “Kumbaya” with the wolf problem. It’s time to remove wolves from the Pacific Northwest.

Patricia Michl
Waterville, Wash.

Why I oppose removing the dams on Klamath River

By E. WERNER RESCHKE
For the Capital Press

Guest
comment
E. Werner
Reschke



I stand in firm opposition to dam removal along the Klamath River. For multiple generations these dams have provided exemplary flood control, and abundance of clean, renewable, reliable and affordable power for the region, in addition to recreational enjoyment.

I understand the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is only asking for comment on the J.C. Boyle Dam, which sits within Oregon’s borders; however, the proposal is to remove four dams along the Klamath River.

Discussing removal of one dam outside the scope of the entire project leads to false assumptions and incorrect conclusions about the overall impact to the environment and Oregonians.

You will no doubt hear and read a wide array of reasons opposing dam removal along the Klamath River.

My comments will focus on three areas: dam sediment, surface flushing and public opinion.

First, starting with the public hearings of SB 76 in 2009 it was clear then, and remains clear now, that no one has seriously addressed the “colloidal goo” build-up behind all four dams. At that time the estimate was 9,000 acre-feet of sediment. It is reasonable to assume, nine years later, there is now even more sediment. To put this into perspective, 9,000 acre-feet is equivalent to 14 square miles of mud. To remove such a volume of material from the riverbed would take 1,500,000 ten-yard dump trucks. In 2009 the cost estimate for such an undertaking was between \$1.5 billion and \$4.5 billion. It will be even more today.

These real costs have yet to be addressed. Who will pay? Rate payers? Tax Payers? Pacific Corp? Klamath River Renewal Corporation? Moreover the emissions created by such a project would not be consistent with Oregon’s pursuit of cleaner air and lower carbon standards.

The alternative is to allow this toxic sediment to travel down river. The vast ecological damage that would occur is unconscionable. To claim to be for clean water and sustainable fish habitat and at the same time allow

more than 9,000 acre-feet of sludge to flow down the Klamath River is incoherent reasoning at best, and potentially the most devastating man-made disaster even witnessed in the U.S. at worst.

Second, without dams along the Klamath serious questions arise concerning surface flushing. Currently the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is required to store and flush several thousand cubic feet of water at a time to address the C. shasta parasite.

Today the Klamath River dams control the flow of this massive rush of water in stages. Without any control from the initial release upriver, what will be the loss of life to unsuspecting wildlife? Furthermore, without the dams controlling this massive flush of water in stages how much more erosion will occur, adding more sediment to river?

Finally, in 2014 Siskiyou County (California) residents voted nearly 80 percent in opposition to dam removal. In 2016 citizens in Klamath County (Oregon) voted 72 percent against dam removal. During this same time a private survey also found 75 percent of people affected by this massive change on the Klamath River opposed dam removal.

It is clear the overwhelming majority of people directly affected by this potential action on the Klamath River are opposed to dam removal. Our government is to be by, for and of the people, not the other way around. This dictate of dam removal comes from outside the area and is being foisted onto those who have depended on these dams for generations.

The people’s will is to keep, enhance and move forward with these dams in place to provide affordable power, recreational opportunities and flood control for the next several generations to come.

For these reasons I stand with the people of the Klamath River basin and the environment in firm opposition to removal of dams along the Klamath River.

E. Werner Reschke represents southern Klamath and Lake counties in the Oregon House of Representatives.

Time to get rid of wolves

Regarding Francine Madden’s position as “wolf mediator” (“Money Runs Out for Contract,” Capital Press, July 13), is this bureaucratic insanity on steroids? Flushing more than \$1.7 million away on a facilitator to have people counseled about their wolf problems is no way to deal with wolves.

Moreover, how effective is this