

OUR VIEW

Rep. DeFazio’s wolf bill comments out of line

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed legislation that would remove the grey wolf from the federal Endangered Species list. The bill passed on a 196-180 vote.

The measure would strip wolves of federal protection in California, and the western two-thirds of Oregon and Washington. Wolves already have been de-listed in Idaho and the eastern one-third of Oregon and Washington.

Cattlemen are hailing the measure’s passage. It now goes to the U.S. Senate where, because chamber rules require 60 votes to end debate, it faces extremely long odds.

We take exception to comments made by Rep. Peter DeFazio, a Democrat who represents Oregon’s 4th District, in defense of keeping federal protections on wolves. He called the bill “a talking point for a few idiots.”

We recognize there are honest disagreements about wildlife policy, but insulting the intelligence of your opponents is hardly the stuff of thoughtful debate. The cattle and sheep producers of the West are not idiots and they deserve more respect from an elected representative.

We also think DeFazio should consider those who have to deal with the wolves first hand.

DeFazio told the House about Oregon’s famous “wandering wolf,” OR-7. OR-7 hailed from northeast Oregon. He wandered to California, came back into the southern Cascades where he found a mate and has produced pups. He and his progeny, seven or eight wolves in total, comprise the Rogue pack — so named not for their behavior but after the river valley where they roam.

“Guess what? We are not having catastrophic predation on cattle in Southern Oregon,” DeFazio said. “We could accommodate more wolves.”

The Rogue pack has a taste for livestock. It was credited with five confirmed kills in a three-week period earlier this month. Producers say the toll is higher, but those kills have not been confirmed by state wildlife officials.

Are the losses to depredation in Western Oregon “catastrophic?” Certainly not, if you aren’t running cattle or sheep on public and private grazing allotments.

Maybe DeFazio would have a different opinion if his livelihood was being devoured on the hoof and there was little he could do about it because the federal government tied his hands.

The gentleman from Springfield need not fear. His district will get more wolves. But should ranchers be forced to continue to bear their losses?

We have always believed that wolves have a place in the wild. But we’ve never believed that cattlemen and sheep producers should be required to provide a free buffet.

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.



OUR VIEW

Monument battle reveals flaws in Antiquities Act

The power of the presidency is in the eye of the beholder.

Time and again, when a president issues an executive order, members of the party that is out of power will raise a fuss about it. When President Barack Obama did something, the Republicans complained, and when President Donald Trump does something, you don’t even have to count to three before a scrum of Democrats sends up a chorus of protest.

Such is the state of politics these days. Effectiveness and thoughtfulness have given way to howling in the dark.

Take, for example, President Trump’s decision last year to downsize a couple of national monuments in Utah. He reduced the Bears Ears National Monument from 1.35 million acres to 228,784 acres and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument from 1.88 million acres to about 1 million acres.

This would seem to be an issue of concern for Native Americans and other residents of Utah, but a batch of Democratic senators and representatives have sent a letter to the White House voicing their disapproval, and environmentalists have gone to court in an attempt to stop the shrinkage.

And curiously, the attorneys general from Washington, California, Oregon and eight other states — including Rhode Island, Vermont, Hawaii, Maine, New York, New Mexico, Massachusetts and Maryland — have filed friend of the court briefs opposing Trump’s move. All are Democrats.

Our reaction: Things must be slow these days if

the most pressing legal issue in those states is the size of a Utah national monument. Surely those high-paid and highly skilled legal scholars can find something more worthwhile to do with their time — and the taxpayers’ money.

The argument they raise is that the president can establish or increase the size of a national monument under the Antiquities Act of 1906 but he can’t shrink it.

Unfortunately, that’s already been done — 12 times, in fact.

If members of Congress and these attorneys general wanted to accomplish something, they would support the repeal of the Antiquities Act. The law allows a president to unilaterally set aside federally owned land. Usually it is done in the waning minutes of his term to build up points with special interests. The number and size of the national monuments is not restricted. Only new monuments in Alaska over 5,000 acres must get congressional approval. That was after President Jimmy Carter went on a binge in 1978 and set aside more than 5 million acres as national monuments — plus millions of acres as national parks, preserves and wildlife refuges.

The best thing that can be done with the Antiquities Act is to rip it up, or at least require congressional approval for all designations of national monuments.

Short of that, the legal posturing by state attorneys general in Washington and elsewhere is just another example of little politicians doing little things.

Associated Press

Arch Canyon within the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah. Congress should repeal the Antiquities Act of 1906, which allows presidents to unilaterally set aside national monuments.



Cap and trade would hurt rural Oregon

By STEPHANIE GIBSON-HAWKS
For the Capital Press

Lawmakers in the Oregon State Legislature are meeting this fall to consider adopting a new law called “cap and trade,” which is intended to reduce our state’s greenhouse gas emissions. While the goal is one we can all support, this solution will harm rural areas and fail to help the environment. As a fourth-generation family farmer in Lane County who cares deeply about the environment and my community, I will be actively opposing the effort.

Cap and trade is a scheme that levies a tax on Oregonians based on their greenhouse gas emissions. It does not require you to reduce emissions; it simply taxes you on them. The money raised — up to \$700 million annually in a recent version of the bill — will go to fund a wide range of politicians’ pet projects. The tax itself will be set by unelected bureaucrats who can raise it at any time without a vote of the legislature. Cap and trade amounts to a big, complicated government program designed to raise money under the guise of combating climate change.

Rural communities will bear the brunt of the cost if cap and trade becomes law. The biggest windfall from the tax will come from of an increase in gasoline prices. It’s likely that a gallon will increase immediately by \$0.16 and then go up from there. For rural residents who have to drive longer distances to get to work or shop and have no transit options, this gas price increase will hit us disproportionately. But the tax will also find you at home through an increase in electricity and natural gas prices. A recent economic analysis estimated that the average Oregon family of four would pay \$500 to \$1,500 more per year under cap and trade.

We all know it’s difficult to attract employers to many of Oregon’s rural areas, and cap and trade will only make this harder. The proposed system is based on one developed by California years ago — a law no other state has since adopted, and for a good reason. Since California implemented cap and trade, its industrial electricity rates have skyrocketed to 86 percent above the national average while its manufacturing job growth has plummeted to half the national average. If you live in the Bay Area, California’s economy has been great for you over the last decade; if you live in rural California, however, you’ve seen family-wage job opportunities disappear and poverty expand. The growing divide between Portland’s economy and that of the rest of Oregon has been well-documented. Cap and trade will only accelerate and deepen this disparity.

Beyond the economic pressures it will bring to rural communities, the biggest problem with cap and trade is that it simply doesn’t work. Even the agency tasked with overseeing California’s program admits that cap and trade is responsible for only a tiny fraction of the state’s greenhouse gas emission reductions. Yet it’s raised billions for politicians to spend on pet projects. Oregon just recently passed new laws to increase renewable energy use, lower carbon in gasoline, and eliminate coal-generated electricity. These are all designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and have barely begun to be implemented. We should give them a chance to work.

Our farm has dramatically reduced our environmental footprint over the years as we’ve sought ways to become more efficient. We embrace collaborative partnerships designed to protect the natural beauty of Oregon. But cap and trade does not advance this shared goal. It is just a big, complicated system designed to raise money. Legislators should reject it.

Stephanie Gibson-Hawks is a Lane County, Ore., dairy farmer.