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# Opinion

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## Our View



An elk with a radio collar.

NPS

# Don't destroy wildlife collar data

In 2017, U.S. District Judge Lynn Winmill ordered the Idaho Department of Fish and Wildlife to destroy data collected from wolf and elk collars that he determined were attached unlawfully to animals inside a national wilderness area.

We think destroying data that does no harm to the animals is an overreach that the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals should overturn.

In 2017, Winmill ruled that a U.S. Forest Service permit allowing Idaho officials to use helicopters to collar elk inside the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness had been authorized contrary to federal environmental and wilderness laws. But that was more than a year after the animals had been collared.

Three environmental groups — Wilderness Watch, Friends of the Clearwater and Western Watersheds Project — sought an injunction against the project, but it was completed before any court hearings could be held.

Initially, IDFG wanted to tranquilize and collar wolves and elk in the course of more than 1,000 helicopter landings over 10 years to confirm their suspicions that elk populations in the wilderness area were plummeting due to predation by wolves.

However, the agency kept scaling back the project until it required only 120 helicopter landings to collar 60 elk — and no wolves — over two days in January 2016.

Though the permit issued by the Forest Service only allowed elk to be collared, an IDFG crew leader “wrongly assumed” that “opportunistic collaring of wolves” would be in line with the agency’s “common

practice” during past helicopter flights.

The judge ruled that the Forest Service circumvented a National Environmental Policy Act requirement to analyze long-term effects of the helicopter expeditions. The federal government allowed IDFG “to get away with slicing its long-term helicopter collaring project into a one-year sliver of a project to mitigate the cumulative impacts,” he said.

The Forest Service couldn’t make an informed decision about the “necessity” of collaring because IDFG had divided its project “into a smaller proposal that hid the true nature of the impacts,” which also violated the Wilderness Act, Winmill said.

Since the helicopter flights have stopped and the animals are already collared, Winmill ruled that the only remedy to address the harm is the destruction of the data that has been collected.

In seeking to overturn Winmill’s injunction, agency officials last week argued that Idaho has a sovereign interest in managing its wildlife and once the helicopter flights had ended, the National Environmental Policy Act doesn’t control the state’s ability to collect and possess the collar data, according to the state agency.

State officials acted in good faith, and were operating under what was at the time a lawful permit issued by the controlling authority. At issue in the original complaint was the Forest Service’s alleged violations, not the state’s actions.

Wildlife advocates claim the data put three wolf packs at risk. That assumes a predetermined outcome from the use of that data when it is a tool that can be used for effective management.

# Bipartisan hope emerging on climate change

John Newton, chief economist of the American Farm Bureau recently wrote: “Agriculture will continue to play an important role in helping the world adapt to and mitigate climate change, but U.S. farmers and ranchers can’t do it alone: partners are needed to help balance economic sustainability with environmental sustainability.” (“Farmers mitigating climate change; partners needed,” Capital Press, Sept. 4).

We couldn’t agree more.

As impeachment proceedings ratchet up the partisan tension in Washington, there’s still hope that progress can be made on the pressing problems of the day. It appears Republicans and Democrats are coming together on one issue that seemed intractable not long ago: climate change.

In the Senate, Republican Sen. Mike Braun of Indiana is teaming up with Maryland Democrat Chris Coons to form a bipartisan climate solutions group.

The Senate group complements the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus in the House that was established in 2016. It became a judgment-free zone where members of both parties could come together for serious discussions about solving climate change. Today, there are myriad bipartisan climate bills in the House, thanks in no small part to the collaborative atmosphere the caucus created.

A bipartisan approach to solving climate change is essential, because passing legislation requires buy-in from both sides of the aisle. Regardless of which party controls the Senate and White House, political winds shift, and policies with broad support will withstand those shifts.

Republicans and Democrats are seeking common ground on climate change because public opinion has reached a tipping point that cannot be ignored. A CBS News poll last month found two-thirds of Americans view climate change as a crisis or serious problem, and a majority want immediate action.

Overwhelming majorities of younger GOP voters regard climate change as a serious threat, too: 77% of them said so in a survey by Ipsos and Newsy this fall.

It’s not just polling motivating Congress — it’s citizens. Volunteers with Citizens’ Climate Lobby are carrying a clear message to their representatives: “Make climate a bridge issue, not a wedge issue.” CCL volunteers have held 1,131 meetings with congressional offices so far this year to bring the parties together on climate change.

Now that we have Republicans and Democrats talking to each other about climate solutions, what major climate legislation will they support together?

A price on carbon offers promising common ground. Thousands of U.S. economists support carbon pricing as an

## GUEST VIEW

Mark Reynolds



Alex Amonette



effective tool to reduce emissions quickly.

Newsweek recently surveyed 300 multinational corporations and found that 95% favor mandatory carbon pricing. And according to Luntz Global, carbon pricing that includes a revenue return to Americans, has 4-to-1 support among all voters.

This year, four carbon pricing bills have been introduced with bipartisan sponsorship.

Of the four, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (H.R. 763) has attracted the most support, with 66 House members now signed on, including Republican Francis Rooney of Florida. This legislation would initiate a fee of \$15 per metric ton of carbon, rising by \$10 per ton each year.

All revenue would be paid out equally to every household. In 10 years, a family of four would receive an annual “carbon dividend” of about \$3,500. Resources for the Future estimates this policy would reduce carbon emissions 47% by 2030. The bill targets 90% reductions by 2050.

John also said: “Innovation is key to advance the preservation of our natural resources.”

And, that is one of the main purposes of this bill — energy innovation.

Although this bill is focused on fossil-fuel emissions — it does not cover things like methane from livestock and manure and nitrous oxide from farming operations — by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, it does help farmers and ranchers to preserve our natural resources. The bill states that “non-fossil fuel emissions that occur on a farm” are not subject to the carbon fee.

Agricultural fuel-generated emissions account for less than 1% of our total emissions (see <https://climate.nasa.gov/causes/>).

In California, Oregon and Washington alone, 16 local governments and 55 businesses have already endorsed the bill, along with hundreds of faith leaders, churches and nonprofits. That support, here and throughout the country, sends a signal to Republican lawmakers that backing H.R. 763 can be a politically astute move.

Despite the current hyper-partisan atmosphere, elected officials are realizing that climate change is one area where differences must be set aside for the good of our nation and the world. Not only are they realizing it, but they’re starting to act on it.

Mark Reynolds is executive director of Citizens’ Climate Lobby. Alex Amonette raises vegetables and hay in Big Timber, Mont., and volunteers with Citizens’ Climate Lobby.

## READERS’ VIEW

### A wolf in sheep’s clothing?

Land O’ Lakes CEO Beth Ford has recently acknowledged in a “60 Minutes” interview that many of her co-op member owners are at risk of losing their farms.

Ford admits: “I think there used to be 92,000 dairy producers in the country and now the last — the number I saw was in the 50,000 level, so 40% reduction.”

Ford blames recent weather and tariffs for the damage to her co-op members.

Ford, like all co-op management, should look in the mirror and to the management of her own co-op as the reason for the loss in her dairy farmer members.

Land O’ Lakes is a dairy farmer member-owned co-op with a reported 1,851 member dairy farmers as of 2018.

Dairy Farmers Of America (DFA) is the largest dairy farmer member owned co-op in the U.S. which grew milk production by 2.5 billion pounds while losing 532 member dairy farms, all in 2018. (Hoard’s Dairyman, Oct. 10 issue)

All in the dairy industry, including co-op management, make more money the more milk that is made — except the dairy farmer milk

maker, who loses money the more milk that is made in excess of profitable demand for the milk.

Existing co-op management have dairy farmer members competing with each other to make the maximum quantity of the lowest cost milk possible, yielding a member milk price less than most members’ cost to make the milk.

Existing U.S. dairy farmers need to change their existing co-op management personnel and/or policies and adopt the National Dairy Producers Organization’s co-op management policies, which precludes the use of non-member milk and imported dairy ingredients and requires all co-op members to share in a pro-rata, across-the-board, proportional milk reduction as required to continuously balance their co-op’s milk intake with profitable demand for member milk yielding a profitable milk price from the marketplace for most co-op dairy farmer members and thereby preserve as many co-op members and U.S. family dairy farms as possible.

If dairy farmers properly manage the milk they make and their co-ops, and comply with basic, universal supply/demand marketplace economics, most U.S. existing family dairy farms

can receive a profitable milk price from the marketplace and survive.

To learn more, contact Mike Eby, NDPO chairman, at (717) 799-0057, [mikee@ndpo.us](mailto:mikee@ndpo.us), or like us on Facebook-National Dairy Producers Organization, or [www.nationaldairyproducerorganization.com](http://www.nationaldairyproducerorganization.com)

Bob Krucker  
Dairy Farmer  
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### Saving the sage-grouse

By the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s most recent estimate, Oregon’s sage-grouse population has dropped 37% since 2003. As a sagebrush steppe indicator species, the grouse’s sharp decline means that all of the fish and wildlife in our sagebrush steppe are also at risk.

When the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined, in 2010, that sage grouse warranted Endangered Species Act protection, ONDA joined dozens of organizations and people working to avoid a listing. After years of meetings West-wide, the Bureau of Land Management’s 2015 plan outlined a strategy for improving essential sage-grouse habitat, including provisions for 13 Research Natu-

ral Areas in eastern Oregon for sage-grouse conservation and management research. This year, a Trump administration amendment blocked the agency from conducting that research — undermining their ability to gain a science-based understanding of how land management affects sagebrush habitat and deploy effective adaptive management techniques.

As Capital Press recently reported, Oregon Natural Desert Association and fellow conservation groups filed a legal challenge against that change to Oregon’s 2015 sage-grouse plan. ONDA hopes this action will allow the BLM to implement robust, science-based management — as envisioned by the stakeholders who collaboratively developed the 2015 sage-grouse plan.

While it was imperfect, all parties involved supported the 2015 plan. Unfortunately, this administration never gave that plan a chance to work and Oregon’s sage-grouse numbers are falling. By asking the courts to restore this key piece of a collaboratively-built plan, we’re hoping to give sagebrush steppe wildlife a chance to survive.

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