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Opinion

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Our View

A BLM nominee with ties to ecoterrorists

We add our voice to those who believe an enemy of livestock grazing with ties to ecoterrorists shouldn't lead the Bureau of Land Management.

Tracy Stone-Manning has been nominated by President Joe Biden.

The agency has a huge footprint in the West. It manages 247 million acres of federal public land, including 155 million acres used for livestock grazing. BLM oversees 18,000 separate grazing permits.

Stone-Manning has standard bonafides that set the hearts of environmental activists aflutter. She spent nearly four years with the National Wildlife Federation, serving as an associate vice president and a senior policy adviser. She served as director of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. She led the Clark Fork Coalition, a conservation group dedicated to preserving the Clark Fork River Basin.



Tracy Stone-Manning

She is no fan of livestock grazing on public lands.

In 1992 she wrote in her master's thesis at the University of Montana, "Into the heart of the beast: A case for environmental advertising," that livestock grazing on public land "is destroying the West."

In a series of mock magazine advertisements, she made the case against a variety of things that she contends hurt the environment, including livestock grazing.

"It is overgrazed. Most likely, the grasses won't grow back, because the topsoil took flight," she wrote. "Worse still, the government encourages this destruction. It charges ranchers under \$2 a month to graze each cow and its calf on public land — your land."

Pretty standard piffle for environmental activists. But, it appears she

may have taken a more active role in radical environmentalism.

In 1989 she typed and mailed a letter for a former roommate, John P. Blount, anonymously warning the U.S. Forest Service that 500 pounds of spikes had been driven into trees in a swath of Idaho's Clearwater National Forest set for harvest.

Blount later served 17 months in prison in connection to the spiking incident.

There is no evidence that Stone-Manning participated directly in driving the spikes. She maintains that she was never under criminal investigation. She was offered, and accepted, immunity from prosecution in 1993 in exchange for her testimony.

She clearly had knowledge of the incident, and was not immediately forthcoming despite the danger the spikes posed to loggers cutting the trees. Anything for the cause.

According to the Montana Stan-

dard, Stone-Manning addressed the incident in a state legislative hearing when she was nominated to lead the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

"I'm sure everyone in this room regrets things they've done in their early 20s, but we all accumulate lessons," Stone-Manning said at the time.

A youthful indiscretion? Hardly.

We agree with Bob Abbey, BLM's director during President Barack Obama's first term, who said her participation in the plot disqualifies her for the position.

"BLM needs a really strong leader," Abbey told the Daily Montanan. "To put someone in that position that has this type of resume will just bring needless controversy that is not good for the agency or for the public lands."

Our View



Associated Press File

America's food system continues to be a point of pride for the nation.

Celebrating America's food system

During the past two weeks Capital Press reporter Sierra Dawn McClain took a close look at how food gets from the farm to the grocery store.

The food system she wrote about is as intricate as a clockwork, but it works fabulously well. Every day of every year, 331 million people directly benefit from this system, which provides them with a vast selection of food — and lots of it — at affordable prices.

And it's resilient.

Last year, when politicians closed restaurants, schools, businesses and other public institutions in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19, the food system was up to the challenge. Farmers, ranchers, processors, distributors and retailers all pivoted to make sure food was available. It was a truly heroic effort.

Today, the nation is emerging from those COVID-provoked shutdowns and every link in the food chain is pivoting back to normalcy.

From time to time, some folks get together to try to figure out how to improve the food system. No doubt those discussions take place around well-stocked lunch or dinner tables.

Those of us who have a little bit of gray hair remember back to our childhood when the selection and quality of food, particularly produce, was much more limited in the winter.

Today, it's a different story. Whether they are in a boutique organic store in Manhattan, a superstore in Kansas or a regional supermarket chain

in the Pacific Northwest, consumers will find that the selection, freshness and affordability of produce and all other foods is astounding. In many parts of the nation, consumers don't even have to go to the store. They can order their food online and have it delivered to their house that day.

There are 40,544 grocery stores in the U.S., and all of them are well-stocked and affordable. They, and the rest of the food system, are a uniquely American miracle.

Several decades ago, a delegation from Vladivostok in the old Soviet Union was visiting a Fred Meyer store in Juneau, Alaska, as part of a sister city exchange. As they toured the grocery section, the Soviets shook their heads in disbelief. Here, in the middle of the largest national forest, during winter, in a city with no roads to the Lower 48 — or anywhere else, for that matter — was a selection of produce that couldn't be found anywhere in the Soviet Union. Not only that, the other three grocery stores in the city were equally well-stocked.

That, quite simply, shows the difference between capitalism and communism, between what freedom produces and what servitude produces.

America's food system is worth celebrating. It remains robust and continues to evolve over time to meet consumers' expectations to feed a hungry nation — and a good part of the world.

From the farm and the ranch to the dinner table, that celebration takes place three times a day.

Taking a stand for property rights at the Supreme Court

Thursday, Oct. 29, 2015, began like any other day at Cedar Point Nursery, in Northern California's Butte Valley. It was early and we were operating at full capacity when chaos erupted. Union activists stormed our facility by surprise. Before the day was over, we found ourselves in a legal fight for our company, our employees, and our private property rights. A fight that the U.S. Supreme Court settled last week.

My wife and I founded Cedar Point Nursery in the late 1990s. Today, we are one of nine California nurseries that supply "mother plants" to fruit growers in California. These customers then produce 85% of all strawberry fruit consumed in the United States.

Our employees are the backbone of the company. During the peak of our harvest season, Cedar Point Nursery employs over 500 people, but our core team is comprised of 45 individuals and family members. They round out the management team and have been with CPN for 15 to 25 years. These are career employees promoted from within.

This is what the United Farm Workers found that morning in 2015 when its union recruiters raided our workplace, crashed our trim sheds, and shouted through bullhorns. The UFW tried to convince our employees to unionize. It failed. Although a few employees were intimidated, the rest ignored the union drama and returned to work.

The raid on our company was a first in this part of California. Most of us have never seen a UFW flag. However, we quickly figured out that this invasion threatened our ability to deliver product on time. We have a narrow six-week window to harvest, process, pack, cool and deliver our plants. We must work at peak efficiency to meet commitments to our customers.

Our staff rose to the challenge, however. Because of our staff's hard work and perseverance, no customer's order was delayed that season.

When the dust set-

GUEST VIEW
Mike Fahner

tled, we were all in agreement: what happened must have been illegal. To our shock, we learned that the union trespassing on to our property was allowed under California law. If we denied the union access, we would be the ones punished.

Under California's union access regulation, we had to allow union organizers onto the property for three hours per day for 120 days per year. California is the only state in the union with this access law, and it applies only to those in the business of agriculture.

Cedar Point Nursery is our life's work. For the union to have the power to put this at risk and threaten our future is wrong.

So, in 2016, with help from the Pacific Legal Foundation and Sagaser, Watkins & Wieland, we sued to overturn California's law.

We never imagined that five years later, this lawsuit would end up before the highest court in the land, but we are grateful that it did. Allowing California's trespass regulation to stand would have opened the floodgates to any manner of property invasions not just in California, but anywhere in the country.

This has been a long journey, however, we never wavered from our belief that what we experienced five years ago was wrong.

Last week, we received the news the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed our property rights, ruling that the state couldn't force us to open our property to union organizers without compensation. The decision means that everyone can enjoy the freedom to decide for themselves who is and isn't welcome on their property. That's a victory for everyone.

Mike Fahner is the owner and president of Cedar Point Nursery in Siskiyou County, Calif. His company is the lead plaintiff in Cedar Point Nursery v. Hassid.