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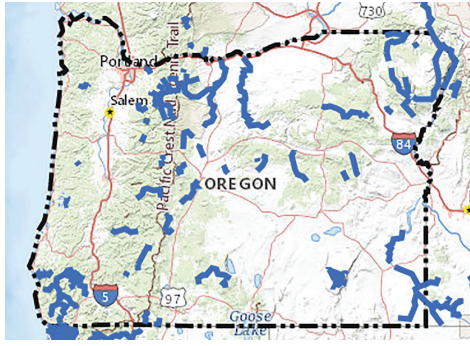
Our View

Wild and scenic rivers that are neither

People across Eastern Oregon — and the rest of the state, for that matter — are right to question a proposal by Oregon Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden to designate 4,700 miles of rivers, creeks, ditches and swales as federal “wild and scenic rivers.”

Perhaps a few actual rivers might deserve attention, but 4,700 miles? That’s the distance from Portland to Oslo, Norway.

When we think of wild and scenic rivers, we think of the Rogue River in Western Oregon or the Metolius River in Central Oregon. In fact, those rivers are already designated wild and scenic — along with 66 others across the state. All told, 1,916 miles of rivers have been designated, according to



Oregon's 68 current wild and scenic rivers. rivers.gov

the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System website.

One wonders where the friends of Wyden and Merkley found any actual rivers that hadn’t already been designated. In Wallowa County, commissioners hired a consulting firm to

track down 404 miles of “rivers” proposed to be designated wild and scenic. They found that most are not even labeled rivers, are not free-flowing and do not have water year-round.

If they are not rivers, how could they be designed wild and scenic rivers?

It’s time for Wyden and Merkley to rethink this bill. Whatever the intent of the bill is, it’s not protecting wild and scenic rivers, because that’s already been done.

The senators say school children and others came up with the list of new rivers. That’s why they called their bill the River Democracy Act.

Maybe school children and environmental groups had a say in the bill, but Eastern Oregon counties didn’t.

Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ore., said he talked with the 63 commissioners representing the 20 counties in his 69,000-square-mile congressional district; 53 commissioners oppose the River Democracy Act.

When Eastern Oregon counties questioned the need to designate more rivers — and to expand the protected zones to a half mile on each side — the senators said they had sent a letter last fall informing them of their plan.

That, of course, is not the point.

The point is that Oregon’s senators would think this is a good idea, without benefit of local support and without fully considering how it will impact Oregonians.

Our View



National Pork Producers Council/Linked In

A California proposition dictates how farmers in other states must raise their hogs if they want to sell pork in the Golden State.

Midwest hog farmers aren't dancing to California's tune

Californians are about to learn what can happen when they try to extend their rule over the rest of the country.

The Associated Press reports that bacon and other pork products will soon be in short supply in California because Midwestern hog farmers have failed to comply with animal care requirements mandated by Proposition 12.

Officially, the Farm Animal Confinement Initiative goes into effect next year. Known as Prop 12, it bans the sale of eggs and pork and veal products in California unless production facilities meet animal-confinement standards dictated by the state.

On its face, Prop 12 deals solely with products sold within the state. The animal welfare advocates who backed the measure, however, knew the larger impacts of Prop 12.

Meat production and distribution is complicated. Part of a litter of pigs born in Iowa could be sold to feeders in Nebraska while others could go to North Carolina. All of the pigs could go then to finishers in other states and end up in multiple packinghouses. Most of the animals that would be subject to Prop 12 reside outside California.

Californians consume 15% of the pork produced in the United States — some 255 million pounds a month. But, California hog farmers only produce 45 million pounds a month.

The practical impact of Prop 12 would be to impose California’s animal husbandry rules on producers throughout the country.

Or, maybe not.

Pork producers in the Midwest have resisted

changing their production practices. To provide their pigs with the space mandated by Prop 12 would require expensive renovations that pork prices won’t support.

An Iowa pork producer quoted by AP said meeting the requirements would cost \$3 million, reducing the number of hogs in his facility from 300 to 250. To break even, he’d need to get another \$20 on each of the remaining animals.

The financial impacts aside, producers say California ag officials have yet to make the final regulations. They don’t want to make changes without knowing precisely how they will be judged.

The industry’s attempts to get the courts to block Prop 12 have been unsuccessful.

“Why are pork producers constantly trying to overturn laws relating to cruelty to animals?” Josh Balk, of the Humane Society of the U.S. asked The Associated Press. “It says something about the pork industry when it seems its business *operandi* is to lose at the ballot when they try to defend the practices and then when animal cruelty laws are passed, to try to overturn them.”

One might also ask why Californians think they can dictate terms for producers in other states.

We do not dispute California’s authority to regulate livestock production within its borders, even if the regulations are wrong-headed. But Californians shouldn’t take it for granted that farmers outside the state will follow suit.

California voters are free to call the tune for pork producers in their state, but Iowa hog farmers don’t have to dance or pay the fiddler.

Why we support keeping the Snake River dams

We add our voice to those who support maintaining the Lower Snake River Dams.

Here at Columbia Grain International we have been supplying the world with grain, pulses, edible beans and oilseeds for over four decades. Our supply chain stretches across the northern tier of the United States from North Dakota to Washington, cultivating the growth of our farmers’ crops to safely nourish the world.

We operate nine grain elevators in Eastern Washington, own or participate in loading grain at 3 Lower Snake River terminals, and are the majority owner in 2 export terminals in the Columbia River District. It’s an understatement to say that we have a vested interest in this topic.

Removing the Lower Snake River dams as part of Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson’s \$33.5 billion framework doesn’t promise to bring back Idaho’s salmon, but it will have devastating effects on our farmers who rely on this river system to successfully transport their crops to key export terminals to supply the international markets.

The Columbia River System is the nation’s single largest wheat export gateway, transporting 50% of all U.S. wheat to markets overseas. The Northwest Infrastructure Proposal will slow international trade including the distribution of wheat, soy, corn, wood, autos, mineral bulks and cruise tourism, and has the potential to eradicate the 40,000 local jobs that are dependent on this trade.

For us, it will endanger the economic viability of at least two Portland-based export terminals, which rely heavily on barges and don’t have the land footprint to expand rail placement capacity.

The removal of the dams will cause transportation methods to shift towards truck and rail, creating greater instability in freight costs, and exposing farmers to potentially higher transportation costs for grain shipments to destination markets, particularly during the fall when corn and soybean shipments from the Midwest are heavy.

Although small compared to the giant Columbia Basin Project upriver on the mainstem Columbia, the lower Snake River also plays an important irrigation role, watering over 60,000 acres of farmland in Central and Southeastern Washington that produce dozens of different varieties of fruits, vegetables and grains.

The evidence is clear. If the dams are breached, our farmers will be paying more and making less at the end of the day.

For over 40 years, the Columbia Snake River System has successfully served our commu-

GUEST VIEW
Jeff Van Pevenage



nities, providing our regions with clean power, jobs, efficient transportation, irrigation, flood control and more. It is critical now more than ever to keep this region stable and competitive in a time of global economic and social uncertainties. We are committed to cultivating the continued growth of our farmers and our PNW communities, and have serious doubts about the inherent cons which we feel drastically outweigh the pros of this proposal.

Proponents of the proposal argue that removing the dams is necessary to restore salmon population. However, studies show that salmon survival rates may be greater now than if no dams existed. This all goes back to the life cycle of fish, and the fact that they spend most of their lives in the ocean. As we learn more about ocean conditions from NOAA Fisheries, West Coast wild salmon and steelhead runs are struggling, and the commonality is the ocean.

When considering dam removal, I’ve studied the statistics which came from 40 years of research by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bonneville Power Administration, and were compiled by retired Fish and Wildlife biologist John McKern. McKern spent much of his 30-year career researching fish survival, and developing and implementing fish passage improvements at the Snake and Columbia river dams. He found that after the fish leave the Columbia River about 88% of the remaining fish die during their first two or three years in the ocean from predators, adverse ocean conditions and commercial fishing.

The Frazier River in Canada is very similar to the Columbia River system. It and other rivers along the West Coast of the U.S. and Canada have no dams and have the same fish problems as the Columbia River system.

Currently, we have done quite well stewarding fish and protecting them every step of the way as they move and make their journey on the river. Removing the dams will have grave implications for our vital farm communities that depend on this transportation system to feed the world. We hope people consider that there are a lot of other things taking place that are impacting our fish.

Jeff Van Pevenage is president and CEO of Columbia Grain International, the leading supplier of bulk grain, pulses, edible beans, oilseeds, both conventional and organic, worldwide.