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# Opinion

Editor & Publisher  
Joe Beach  
Managing Editor  
Carl Sampson  
opinions@capitalpress.com | CapitalPress.com/opinion

## Our View

# A path to better relationships with farmers, ranchers

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee recently granted Capital Press reporter Matthew Weaver a lengthy interview covering topics of interest to farmers and ranchers in the Evergreen State.

An edited transcript of that interview appears elsewhere in this edition. We appreciate that Inslee took the time to answer our questions.

Nothing in the interview was surprising, as Inslee has been consistent in his views during his tenure as governor. But we did find ourselves agreeing with Inslee when he discussed his wish that he had a better relationship with farmers and ranchers.



Washington Gov. Jay Inslee

“I wish that I had a one-on-one relationship with every single farmer and rancher. It would be great. Unfortunately, there’s quite a number of folks.

“I would like to have a sit-down conversation over tea, or even a cold one at some point, with hundreds of thousands of people. That could improve it, but time doesn’t permit that, unfortunately.”

We think politicians of all stripes would benefit from having more one-on-one conversations about the policies they advocate with the people they serve.

From a practical standpoint, it

would be impossible for a sitting governor to have a one-on-one with every voter. And we appreciate the demands elected officials have on their time.

Governors such as Inslee make public appearances all the time. Most often these are carefully crafted events to highlight favored policy initiatives to supportive audiences. There’s not much discussion, certainly no debate.

For example, in November, Inslee — along with other governors, including Oregon Gov. Kate Brown — traveled to Glasgow, Scotland, to attend the United Nations climate summit. While there, he advocated policies that will have a big impact on the people of Washington.

Elected officials are in a unique position to speak out and to be heard. Theodore Roosevelt called it the bully pulpit.

We think that they also have a unique responsibility to listen to the governed.

If the governor wants to have more one-on-one contact with farmers, maybe he could carve out a block of time — the same amount of time it takes to fly to Scotland and back — to drop into local coffee shops, livestock auctions and grain elevators across the state. He could add in a tavern or two for good measure.

We think he would be well received if he sat back and enjoyed a cup of coffee, or a cold one, while listening to the people he serves.

## Our View



A gray wolf.

IDFG

# States can best manage West’s wolves

For all of the gnashing of teeth and worries about the impending decline of Idaho’s wolves, any predictions of their demise are greatly exaggerated.

Last year, the Idaho Legislature modified the law related to hunting and trapping wolves. Since it’s the state’s job to manage them, such laws were well within the purview of lawmakers.

Wolf advocates said the legislators were threatening the state’s 1,500 wolves and any efforts to reduce that number would mark the beginning of the end for the predators.

In the year since the law was passed, not much has happened. The state’s wildlife managers keep tabs on the wolves that have taken up residence in Idaho. What they found is — drum roll, please — the wolf population is about the same as before.

The wolf population peaks in the summer, after the pups are born. After that, any deaths are counted. The population’s annual low point is about 900 in the early spring, before the next batch of pups is born.

State wildlife managers say that if for some reason the population began to decrease too far, they could make mid-course adjustments.

That’s the sort of thing wildlife managers do.

Montana’s Legislature passed similar legislation. For the vast majority of the state the new hunting and trapping rules had little impact on the overall population. However, they found that some

wolves from Yellowstone National Park had a tendency to drift outside the park and were killed by hunters and trappers.

When wildlife managers saw this, the hunts in that area were called off. The Yellowstone wolf packs will no doubt rebuild.

There is a concept that continues to be circulated about wolves: They are timid creatures that need the help of man to survive in the wild. Environmental groups use that concept to build a case for protecting wolves, and raising money.

Unfortunately for them, wolves are robust, smart and reproduce rapidly. Idaho started with 35 wolves imported from Canada in the mid-1990s. Now the population peaks at 1,500 each year, even with hunting, trapping and culling wolves that attack livestock.

Similarly, the wolf populations in Washington state and Oregon are healthy, yet the way they are managed has frustrated many ranchers.

Idaho and Montana have shouldered the responsibility of managing wolves in those states. They are held accountable and able to make changes as needed to maintain the health of the wolf populations without sacrificing the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers.

Our hope is that, some day, political leaders in the nation’s capital, Washington state and Oregon will allow wildlife managers to do the same statewide.

The last thing any of those states need is for the federal government to take over all management of wolves. Idaho and Montana have demonstrated that it’s not needed, or wanted.

# What’s the right amount of carbon dioxide?

School teachers like to see their students alert, attentive and engaged, so when some of the students start to get drowsy, the teacher (hopefully) knows that it’s not due to a boring lesson or inadequate sleep, but because the classroom air is stale from all those students exhaling carbon dioxide with each respired breath. At 1,000 molecules of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) per million molecules of air (parts per million or ppm) some people begin to feel drowsy, restless and stifled.

Reactions differ, but above 2,000 ppm people begin to experience headaches, poor concentration, loss of attention, increased heart rate, nausea or dizziness, worsened asthma or allergy symptoms. Opening a window and letting in a breeze at the current outdoor CO<sub>2</sub> level of about 412 ppm solves the stagnation (alternatively, the school may need to ventilate better).

In one Canadian study, 43% of the classrooms had CO<sub>2</sub> levels above 1000 ppm. A Chinese classroom studied had an average school day CO<sub>2</sub> concentration of 2,080 ppm with a noon peak over 3,000 ppm. A Harvard study found increasing indoor CO<sub>2</sub> levels by 400 ppm would result in a decrease in cognitive functioning by 21% and at 3,000 ppm students could experience up to an 80% decrease.

What a drag on student grades to struggle to pay attention to your teacher or to concentrate on your test or to be disciplined for wiggleness; what a frustration for teachers; what a waste of tax dollars. Then again, adults have to consider their home or office conditions.

Above 5,000 ppm, toxicity or oxygen deprivation could occur; 40,000 ppm is immediately harmful due to oxygen deprivation. Current trends project that in 2100 average global outdoor CO<sub>2</sub> levels would reach 800 ppm.

Before the Industrial Revolution started in the mid-1700s, global atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> was about 280 ppm — really fresh air.

Plants use CO<sub>2</sub> as the raw material for photosynthesis, and increased CO<sub>2</sub> levels increase plant growth, leading some indoor plant-growing facilities to supplement CO<sub>2</sub>.

However, when CO<sub>2</sub> levels are high:

- Plants can become less nutritious. For example, increased CO<sub>2</sub> levels can increase plant growth and fiber levels, thereby lowering digestibility.
- A part of the plant that is not marketed could be favored more (have more yield increase) than the marketed part (e.g. the seed, the leaf or the root).
- Less valuable plants in an ecosystem can gain a competitive advantage over preferred plants. For example, higher levels of CO<sub>2</sub> can increase the invasion of cheatgrass along with other annual grasses and juniper, which can reduce more desired native species (overgrazing further increases the competitive advantage of weeds).

GUEST VIEW

Elizabeth Graser-Lindsey



Cheatgrass can also increase fire frequency and extent (a problem made worse because cheatgrass is fire adapted). Because cheatgrass has a much shorter period of good nutritional quality compared with native perennial grasses, the quality of rangelands may decrease with increases in CO<sub>2</sub> levels (compounded by the other factors).

• Outbreaks of some insects and infectious diseases may increase.

The earth’s atmosphere lets through light and other forms of radiative energy in different amounts depending on wavelength. The groups of wavelengths where the atmospheric gases are transparent (not absorbing or scattering radiation) are like an atmospheric window, whereas the greenhouse gases like water and CO<sub>2</sub> absorb the energy passing through in certain unique wavelength ranges and reduce the transparency of the atmosphere completely or partially. The atmosphere lets visible sunlight through but it blocks or traps much of the energy at other wavelengths we don’t see (heat) that is emitted from the earth back toward space, creating a greenhouse effect and a warm earth.

Because CO<sub>2</sub> obscures/reduces the atmosphere’s transparency in a unique wavelength range, as CO<sub>2</sub> increases, heat builds up on earth. Current CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations have increased enough to heat the earth and make changes in the earth’s weather systems; drought, heat waves and reduced snowpack are some of the outcomes that impact agriculture.

It is wise for people to protect their home and habitat, for their own health and well-being. A price on carbon combined with cashback payments and border adjustment would encourage us to use low CO<sub>2</sub>-emitting products and to reduce harmful carbon dioxide emissions. This approach is market-based and leaves the decisions on what changes to make to individuals. By the fee (assessed at the well-head, mine and border and passed along) being 100% refunded as a monthly, equal dividend to all Americans, it protects the poor and middle classes (even gives them a boost) and it does it without growing government.

Studies show that rural Americans would be affected similarly to other Americans. The border adjustment protects the American business from unfair competition from countries that haven’t yet enacted a carbon fee.

Elizabeth Graser-Lindsey is a volunteer with the Citizens’ Climate Lobby and has a Ph.D. in bio-environmental engineering (agricultural meteorology and climatology). She and her husband own and operate a small farm in Beaver Creek, Ore.