

# Opinion

— EDITORIAL —

## Those letters to the Forest Service ...

We went back and read the letter County Commissioner Mark Bennett sent with just his signature to the Forest Service, and in general, the content is simply that of an invitation to dialogue. It lays out goals. No harm, no foul.

However, Bennett uses the word “cooperation” in passing somewhere in the middle of that letter—a word that sends up instant red flags to open forest access advocates everywhere.

His first letter could likely have been overlooked if a second letter, signed jointly by Bennett and fellow Commissioner Tim Kerns, hadn’t been drafted and sent. That letter also expresses willingness for “cooperation.”

There’s a phrase that describes this second letter, which Tim and Jan Kerns penned to the Forest Service: sucking up. We’re sure they viewed it as positive public relations. The intensity of the backfire it received proves otherwise.

We see no benefit gained by that letter—it certainly wasn’t necessary. In fact, it created confusion and anger as was evident in the dozens of emails that filled our inboxes over the past weekend, and continue to trickle in today. It would be easy to point fingers at the “Bennett, Kerns thank USFS” article by *The Baker City Herald* as the instigator, but aside from the unfortunate use of another confusing C-word, “collaborate,” their coverage seemed pretty accurate to us, based on the content of that Kerns letter.

Baker County is in a time when much debate exists between the terms “cooperation” and “coordination” in regard to its dealings with the Forest Service. The County is also in a time when three commissioners, two newly elected to their positions, have only been working together for three months and are still trying to figure each other out as a team. And, very importantly, we’re in a time when the new County Commission Chair, Bill Harvey, and Commissioner Mark Bennett, have voiced the desire to take a step away from the less decisive stance of the former Board of Commissioners, of which Kerns was part. Voters mandated that change overwhelmingly last November.

We are not in a time during which we need, as a County, to try making the Forest Service feel warm fuzzies for our leadership. We have no doubt Forest Service management and County management are capable of politely and professionally meeting and talking. We expect

that of them all. We don’t anticipate they’ll always agree. We don’t expect our elected officials to gloss over pertinent issues inside a ludicrous praise-fest. (The Kerns letter praises local forest management, on Dooley Mountain for example, where beetle kill is rampant, and fires created by an overload of unmanaged fuel have sterilized the soil in places.)

In our minds, if the Forest Service doesn’t care for a few choice words from Bill Harvey in an interview—so what? When any two entities are on opposite sides of an issue as contentious as the Travel Management Plan, we expect tension. Why did the Kernses take it upon themselves to jump in with that letter as self-appointed damage controllers?

Kerns says he’s “confused” about how much power the County has. A bit of advice: When in doubt, *don’t*. As in, don’t declare anything in writing on County letterhead when you aren’t clear on the subject at hand. It won’t turn out well.

In addition, a serious question was raised by the letter regarding new County consultant Andy Rieber. Harvey says her consultation is limited to 10 hours worth of work. Bennett says he’d never even considered adding cooperation until he’d read an article by Rieber. So how did such limited interaction with one solitary individual cause both Bennett and Kerns to suddenly tell the Forest Service in two separate letters they were also looking forward to “cooperation?”

How was Rieber identified to bring on board to begin with? Who else was considered? Who suggested her to Harvey? Nothing personal against Ms. Rieber. We don’t know her and she’s likely very talented. We’re even in favor of the commissioners hiring expertise. But how did this step happen exactly?

As we understand it from other experts in this area, cooperation, used only in very limited situations, isn’t something to even consider until and unless the proper steps are in place for the coordination process.

We think Mark Bennett made a mistake signing the Kerns letter, but do we believe he’s suddenly turned on his own long-standing promise and is now willing to sign a cooperation agreement with the USFS? No, we don’t. And if he’s somehow being pulled between two opposing forces, he needs to stand firm in his own beliefs. The people will be behind him.

In the end, we shouldn’t have Harvey sending a letter alone asking for comment extensions, Bennett sending a letter on his own, and Bennett/Kerns sending a separate letter together. We hope our three commissioners unite in their correspondence, and continue toward coordination.

We hope they focus on building that “strong, trustful and respectful” relationship Kerns promised to the Forest Service with the citizens of Baker County—not placating a Federal agency.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

## — LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

### Argyria is real

To the Editor:

The gift subscription I’ve been receiving has been a highlight for me each Friday. A couple of weeks ago there was an article that caught my attention regarding the making and using of colloidal silver. As I was reading the presentation summary of Tom Omann I could see myself doing many years ago the exact same things he demonstrated at the Oath Keepers meeting last month. Everything inside of me was screaming, “Nooooo! Wait!”—until he gave his warning that colloidal silver taken in excess may cause argyria.

I was diagnosed with Hepatitis-C over 20 yrs ago. A friend introduced me to homemade colloidal silver (CS). His studies and testimonials showed proof of successful treatments ranging from cancer to Hep-C to HIV to severe skin disorders, and more. So, I tried it. After several months of making my own CS, I began to notice my liver enzyme levels were down to normal or just above high-normal. And, my viral loads had been radically reduced. Fantastic! If a little is good, more is better—right?

After five years of consuming 3/4 ga-

lon per day of homemade CS, I began to notice the discoloration in my skin and finger nails. I ceased personal consumption of CS, but the damage was done. Being a Papa Smurf look-alike contest winner was a certainty in my future. Glow-in-the-dark. Walking Dead. You name it. There is still no reversal known for argyria, the bluish-gray discoloration of the skin.

Although having some laser treatments many years ago, there remains the distinct discoloration in my skin and nails. It is not as pronounced in the treated areas of my head and neck, but the silver particles have slowly spread back out. Again, not nearly as bad as it once was. I no longer get all of the awkward stares I was once receiving. My liver enzyme levels are still in the same range—normal to high-normal, although my viral load has gradually increased.

Do I believe colloidal silver works? Most definitely! But, be warned not to over-indulge. You might be the next Paul Karason or Rosemary Jacobs.

**Michael Pace**  
North Carolina

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— GUEST OPINION —

## Militarization of the Police: not a problem in Baker Co.

By Jerry Boyd  
Special to The Baker County Press



Submitted Photo

Jerry Boyd, a Baker City resident since 2003, is a retired Chief of Police with 50 years of combined (full time and Reserve) law enforcement experience. He holds a Master of Science Degree from California State University, Long Beach and is the author of ten published books on law enforcement/public safety topics. He served as Director of the Baker County Consolidated 9-1-1 Dispatch Center from 2003-2012 and currently coordinates the Eastern Oregon Reserve Officer Training Academy.

A current hot topic of discussion centers around the “militarization of police” a subject that may have some relevance in some cities and counties but which, in Eastern Oregon, I contend has little relevance.

Yet some individuals and some groups even here in a very conservative part of the state seem fixated on the possibility of police militarization. I’ve spent all of my adult life in law enforcement, mostly full-time but also as a current reserve officer. In the course of working for various departments in several states I have, with each new employment, sworn to uphold the “Law Enforcement Officers Code of Ethics.”

Any law officer who takes that oath seriously can never misuse their position, their authority, or any equipment available to them.

No professional, ethical cop will ever do anything but protect the Constitutional rights of every citizen he or she serves.

The implied problem with “militarization of law enforcement” is that certain items of equipment and armament will, in the opinion of some, be used to deny citizens their rights under the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

The expressed fear most often voiced is that cops will use their “military” equipment to violate the Second Amendment of the Constitution—the right to keep and bear arms.

If I lived in one of many large cities and counties in this country where so-called police leaders have prostituted themselves at the altar of political correctness in order to serve their own selfish purposes, I might worry about “militarization.”

Having the honor of meeting and working with most of the Police Chiefs and Sheriffs in Eastern Oregon, I have absolutely no doubt at all that they, and the men and women who work with them, will always uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States—not just part of it, but all of it.

So what about all that military “stuff” cops have available today?

The equipment we have is designed to protect us, and you. There is no more succinct way to say it than that. It is an unfortunate fact of life in our society today that criminals often out-gun those of us who protect you from them. A sidearm is no match for

a long gun.

If, God forbid, we ever experience an active shooter in a school or other public place I suspect most people would want us to have the capability of protecting their children or themselves.

History, by the way, shows that American law enforcement has been equipped with long guns since the first police department in this nation was created in Boston Massachusetts. Our technology has improved, but what technology hasn’t?

Some are concerned about law enforcement having access to armored vehicles (APCs) such as the one available to us in Eastern Oregon. The fact is that those vehicles are defensive, not offensive in nature.

They have no mounted weapons and, in fact, are used to transport people safely into and out of danger zones. One of the most common uses of APCs is to evacuate citizens in a manner that keeps them safe.

Any concerns about potential misuse of such vehicles should have been alleviated when the newly appointed Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash clearly stated in a public forum that “our vehicle here in Eastern Oregon will never be used to violate anyone’s constitutional rights.”

Knowing his fellow law enforcement leaders in our region I think it is fair to say he spoke for all of them.

In conclusion, I have long subscribed to the saying, “It is not the tool one should fear, but the fool who misuses it.”

Cops in Eastern Oregon are not fools—they are dedicated to protecting you, not abusing your rights.

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