

Opinion

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

Cleaning up meth problem will take societal changes

To the Editor:
Recently there was an article about my son and his meth addiction and suicide in *The Baker City Herald*. I would like to follow up. Meth has disrupted the family. My 3 ½ year-old granddaughter is under my oldest son's care and I am an on-call grandpa babysitter. I'm living in an RV and try to take advantage of some free camping at state camp grounds a few days per month or maybe a Forest Service camp ground with reduced rates for disabled vets.

There are lot of Viet Nam service bumper stickers. Conversations usually start with, "Who were you with" then progress to "Where are you from?" I usually end up telling them my troubles with meth. In almost all cases they can tell a meth story too. I have been making it a point to ask travelers about their meth stories. I would venture to guess that 98% have a family member on it, son, daughter or grandchild or know of a close friend's trouble with it. I've learned enough to know that we have a national emergency. Maybe the number two emergency in the country. Number one is apathy.

I've gotten cynical the last several years. I'm appalled at the ignorance of most of the people. Many actually brag about the fact that they don't read a newspaper or watch the news. The attitude among men, fathers, with kids or grandkids is, if the beer is cold and the women are hot and there is game in the hills and a game on TV, don't bother me. I would venture to say that most in this country have never met a senator, congressman or state representative or written a letter to the editor. I guess they figure freedom and good government just falls from the sky. If that description fits then you are the problem. Curing a problem like the meth epidemic is going to require a shift in attitude. And it better happen. Take it seriously. America will not survive this unless a turnaround happens.

Since Nixon declared a war on drugs we have probably spent near a trillion dollars, have had untold incarcerations, and millions of broken homes and untold suicides. Billions of dollars flow out of the country to enrich foreign drug cartels and with half of the country running for president I hear nothing on what to do about it. I have some ideas but I guess they will have to be on Face Book or talked about with my government leaders because the problem exceeds any 300 words every two weeks. Thirty years of liberal approaches haven't worked. It's time for some gonad regeneration.

Steve Culley
John Day

Forest Service ignoring and using stall tactics

To the Editor:
For several years it was a shell game. Throw out enough varying plans, Subparts, and meetings, with different catch phrases for what equated to closing roads and restricting overall motorized access and the forest service hoped to either disenfranchise enough of the public, or aggravate enough, to make them quit, unfortunately, I and the people of Eastern Oregon have not wavered under that approach and have actually become more proficient in following the pea and keeping tabs on what the USFS is doing. Now we return to the tactics of Monica Schwalbach the initiator of the first Record of Decision to restrict motorized access on our forest, which is to ignore and stall hoping for the people to simply fall out and go away. No more prime an example exists of that than my dealings

over the last month with the current forest supervisor and former understudy to Ms. Schwalbach, Mr. Tom Montoya.

For the last month I have requested information as to who makes up his interdisciplinary team for the development of the Subpart A report of travel management on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. My initial request was June 6th 2015, as of today's date, July 6th Mr. Montoya has not answered my email. I believe we should know who is planning our future access to the Blues.

I again request from Supervisor Montoya a list of who makes up the ID team for the development of the Subpart A report, and what tools, models and best available science they are using to plan the minimum roads needed for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

Maybe in a more public form Mr. Montoya will answer the question, but as of this afternoon, no such information has been given.

John George
Bates

'Circumvent' describes USFS actions

To the Editor:
"Circumvent." I came across this word recently, and now it sticks in my already cluttered head.. (The definition—around, to get the better of or, prevent by craft or ingenuity.) I feel the workshops being facilitated by High Desert Partnerships are a platform to circumvent the overwhelming negative response to the Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision.

Over 1,300 comments were received with 95% disapproval of the plan.

I find it alarming no workshops are scheduled for Union or Baker County.

Repeatedly Forest Access For All has requested public meetings with the Forest Service and voiced our dislike of the workshop scenario.

Once again this agency appears to suffer hearing loss. Baker County Commission Chair, Bill Harvey, is working to arrange a public meeting.

Last year FAFA spent thousands of dollars presenting meetings and encouraging people to speak and write concerns on the proposed Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision. FAFA members traveled across eastern Oregon throughout the summer months. The efforts of dedicated members combined with others generated over 1,300 comments. Finally late in the fall, 11 counties made the right move and rejected the proposed forest plan. Something worked. Be aware when you attend these workshops. It is imperative you stick to your message. A piece of information came out of the John Day meeting, which to me was very alarming. The forest supervisor responded to the crowd with the insinuation, when it comes to push and shove the forest service doesn't need to respond to any of our concerns.

Once again engagement with the Forest Service would indicate we are dickering over a preconceived conclusion with the illusion public concerns have been addressed.

At the very least we need language in the Blue Mountain Forest Plan that preserves and protects our present level of access.

That would be a fair beginning for dialog. Road closures through the back door of projects needs to stop.

To date, 14 workshops have been scheduled, none in Union or Baker County.

I want endless meetings and comments to end, but request two more: One in Union and one in Baker County. Preferably at a time and date working people can attempt to attend the meetings.

Wanda Ballard
Baker City

2015 legislative session ends

Oregon's current legislative session, which began February 2, has officially come to an end as of Tuesday.

Just two weeks into the

session, a new governor, Kate Brown, replaced scandal-embattled John Kizhaber.

The five-month session then turned particularly

contentious with issues like mandatory sick leave, carbon standards, legalized marijuana use and the new gun control measure—HB941.

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— GUEST OPINION —

WWNF update

By Tom Montoya

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest is well into summer-mode! And that means the usual increase in forest activities, forest visitation, and the opportunity to enjoy the seasonal splendor of the Blue Mountains. As we approach the bustling summer season, I wanted to relay the status of ongoing planning projects here on the forest.

As most of you know, we are continuing to engage our communities on forest plan revision, focusing on several key topics that have been brought forward through formal public comments and continued public involvement. The forest will be participating in upcoming public engagement opportunities through assistance from local organizations including counties, tribes, members of the public, and stakeholder groups. We don't have all the meetings scheduled in the communities surrounding the Wallowa-Whitman, but are working hard on making sure our publics have an opportunity to be a part of this dialog on the Forest Plan Revision. So more information is coming soon about meetings in the area and how you can participate.

Secondly, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest is continuing its efforts to complete Subpart A of travel management planning. What is Subpart A? Subpart A process is a science-based, interdisciplinary roads analysis at the forest level which will be documented in a Travel Analysis Report (TAR). It is important to understand that Subpart A is a process and not a decision with actions to be implemented. The completed report (TAR) is a living document that displays findings as opportunities and recommendations to inform future management decisions. The TAR will support the objectives found in the current Wallowa-Whitman forest plan as amended.

The road system identified under the Subpart A analysis would: 1) be a baseline system for Forest Service administration and management of natural resources across the forest; 2) consider long-term funding expectations; 3) describe potential options for roads not identified as necessary for future resource management needs; and 4) provide recommendations for roads where resource concerns have been identified as well as looking at those roads where we do not have concerns. Based on the analysis roads could be considered for a status change (opened, closed, decommissioned or converted to a motorized trail). These are only recommendations which would be considered as part of future project level decision making.

The Wallowa-Whitman remains committed to completing the Subpart A analysis by this fall. The Forest has incorporated key public concerns raised during the public involvement process over the past eight years. A preliminary draft analysis report (TAR) that addresses these concerns is currently undergoing review at our Regional Office.

Based on the review results, the forest will complete any updates or changes needed and the complete Travel Analysis Report will be made available to the public and shared with our communities. It is also important to understand that the TAR is a living document that may be updated as needed in the future. This analysis is only providing road management suggestions for future site specific planning



Submitted Photo

Tom Montoya began his Forest Service career in 1985. He is currently the Forest Supervisor for the Wallowa Whitman National Forest, headquartered in Baker City.

efforts, and those site specific planning efforts will be open for comment from the public prior to any decision. So I do strongly encourage further public involvement during site specific project planning efforts when road management decisions will actually be made.

Many folks may recall that the forest previously prepared an environmental impact statement (EIS) and Record of Decision for Subpart B of Travel Management; Subpart B is the process to actually designate the roads, trails, and areas available for public motor vehicle use and publish in a motorized visitor use map (MVUM). After careful consideration, and recognizing intense community concerns it was determined to withdraw the decision in early 2012.

In March, 2015 Jim Peña, Pacific Northwest Regional Forester, directed me, as Forest Supervisor for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest to defer any additional work required under Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule until after the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision is completed, with the following exceptions: Hell's Canyon National Recreation Area, Bald Angel and Sled Springs Travel Area decisions, to comply with court orders that resulted from past litigation, and complete implementation of the decision on the South Fork Burnt River Travel Planning Area.

In line with the Regional direction, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest outside of the above exceptions has paused Subpart B analysis until the Forest Plan Revision is complete. Although the process is currently paused, we continue our efforts to develop and build trust and relationships with our communities, and when we resume work across the forest on the Subpart B analysis we hope to continue to work with you through both formal and informal engagements.

I recognize that travel management planning continues to generate considerable public interest and debate. I also know that forest access is vital to sustaining the customs, culture, and economic stability of the region and that there are also those who are concerned about the impact of the road system on natural resources. Because of these concerns the forest remains committed and obligated to providing a safe, responsible, and affordable transportation system that meets the needs of the natural resources and public. I understand that this process has been and continues to be challenging, but we look forward to innovative opportunities and creative solutions that result in meeting community needs, improving forest resource protection, all while meeting the intent of the agency's national policy.

Thank you for taking time to engage on these important issues, and I look forward to all of our community conversations.

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