

Opinion / Local

Proposed Owyhee monument

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Malheur County Court (Commission) Judge Dan Joyce said, “Generally, when a president goes out of office, they sign something normally detrimental to all counties, without the input of the local elected people, or any citizens. And, that’s the normal process.”

He said, “During the fire season here, in the last month or so, we had a group of people from Arizona staying here—well, we thought they were from Arizona, they were Arizona firefighters—but, they were actually from Utah, and, the county that had the monument that they’ve had to deal with for the past few years. And, their advice was, ‘If you can keep it from happening (the Owyhee Canyonlands national monument designation), keep it from happening, because, we’re from Utah, and we had to go to Arizona to get jobs, so we could come to Oregon to fight fire.

Joyce was referring to the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, an area of 1.8 million acres, established in 1996 by President Bill Clinton, and located in southern Utah, in Kane County. Clinton signed the designation while seated on the Arizona side of the Grand Canyon.

“It’s just not a local, user-friendly option for us. It’s about a legacy

for a president, is what it’s about. He’ll go down in history, if it’s written against the people of this county, or eastern Oregon, and, nobody will like him. They may not like him anyway, but, this will just add fuel to the fire,” Joyce said, speaking about the potential designation.

Joyce said, last October, the Malheur County Court sent an opposition letter regarding the national monument designation, to Representative Greg Walden, who’s been playing a key role in supporting Malheur County’s plight. On Wednesday morning, the Court passed unanimously a resolution in opposition of the designation of the Owyhee Canyonlands as a national monument.

In July, Republican Representative Crescent Hardy of Nevada offered the following Amendment to House Resolution (HR) 2822, the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2016:

“At the end of the bill, before the short title, insert the following: Sec. _____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to make a Presidential declaration by public proclamation of a national monument under chapter 3203 of title 54, United States Code in the counties of Mohave and Coconino in the State of Arizona, in the counties of Modoc and Siskiyou in the State of California, in the

counties of Chaffee, Moffat, and Park in the State of Colorado, in the counties of Lincoln, Clark, and Nye in the State of Nevada, in the county of Otero in the State of New Mexico, in the counties of Jackson, Josephine, and Malheur in the State of Oregon, or in the counties of Wayne, Garfield, and Kane in the State of Utah.”

Joyce said that the Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA), based in Bend, is promoting the designation, and referenced the Owyhee Canyonlands Campaign’s website, wldowyhee.org, which states that, “Statewide and local support for protecting this special place is growing.” Joyce said, “This is not true, from local County government. There’s probably about 70% opposition within the County.”

Supporting the designation are groups including the Owyhee Canyonlands Campaign, ONDA, and Malheur County-based Friends of the Owyhee.

Joyce voiced his frustration with misinformation, saying that representation from ONDA was present during a Malheur County Court session, and visibly taking notes, however, it was discovered later that, “They (the notes) weren’t even close, and didn’t align with what was said at the meeting,” he said.

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— GUEST OPINION —

Public lands: mismanaged at the Federal level

By Sen. Doug Whitsett

The scope of the mismanagement of our more than 300 million acres of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) federal lands was once again made evident by the smoke-filled August skies.

Our timber and rangeland resources have been incinerated by multiple, enormous wildfires raging out of control in most of the western states.

According to the National Interagency Fire Center, over eight million acres had burned as of the beginning of September.

Annual greenhouse gas emissions from wildfires dwarfs our nation’s emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels. Their massive destruction and wholesale pollution has become an annual and ever-enlarging consequence of failed federal resource management.

Those repetitious wildfires are serving to focus the attention of a rapidly growing group of western legislators on the need to change the scope of federal land management. Many state legislators now believe the transfer of federal lands into state ownership is the method of choice for accomplishing that goal. I strongly agree!

The U.S. Government controlled more than 90 percent of the land in 10 mid-western and southern states for decades. Missouri Democrat Senator Thomas Hart Benton struggled for more than 30 years to successfully rectify that untenable situation. Largely due to his efforts, the U.S. government has already transferred all but about five percent of federal land ownership, in the states east of the Rocky Mountains, to the private sector and to state governments.

However, our federal government continues to own more than 50 percent of all the land in the 12 most western states. According to a recent 60 Minutes documentary, that land contains more than \$150 trillion in mineral resources and more recoverable oil and gas than the rest of the world combined. It also encompasses the preponderance of our nation’s public forest, grazing and recreation resources.

Naysayers tell us the population in states east of the Rockies want “their” public lands preserved for the future at all costs. We might suggest that they sell some of their own private and state owned lands to the federal government to be “saved” for their posterity.

Other pessimists say the states do not have the scope of management skills to oversee such vast areas. They worry the cost of resource supervision would be too great for the states to bear.

It is true that the western states currently manage much less public trust lands than their federal counterparts. Most states received ownership of between five and 10 percent of their land mass when they obtained statehood. That public trust land is generally fragmented, separated by long distances and difficult to oversee

And it is also true that many of us are not unwavering supporters of current methods used to manage our state trust lands. But the fact of the matter is that states are currently doing an exponentially better job of managing their public trust resources than their federal counterparts.

According to the Congressional General Accounting Office (GAO), the federal government generates only 73 cents in revenue for every dollar spent on resource management. Incredibly, it loses 27 cents of every dollar spent on managing the most valuable public estate on the planet.

Western state governments can and already are doing better. According to a recent Property and Environment Research Center (PERC) report, on average, the western states generate more than \$14 in

revenue for every dollar spent on resource management.

Despite the fragmented nature of state trust resources, western states generate more than 50 times

more net revenue than the federal government for every dollar spent on public land management.

Federal lands are required by law to be managed for multiple use. The 1960 Multiple-Use Sustainable Yield Act mandates how the USFS manages its resources, including timber harvest, livestock grazing, mineral extraction and recreation. The Federal Land and Policy Management Act of 1976 similarly regulates BLM management.

It turns out that managers of that federal land lose money on all four of the mandated multiple uses! But at the same time, state resource managers make significant profits from all four sectors

The PERC Report found that the USFS loses nearly \$150 on each one thousand board feet of timber it sells in Montana and Idaho while the BLM loses nearly \$200. On average, state trust lands make a profit of about \$ 15 per thousand board feet of timber marketed in those states. The difference is stark! Management of federal timber harvest sales costs between \$260 and \$315 more per thousand board feet of harvested timber.

According to the PERC Report and GAO data, the USFS loses 90 cents of every dollar spent on grazing management. It generates only about six cents per acre on its forest rangeland.

The BLM does only slightly better, losing 86 cents per dollar spent on grazing management. That agency generates about eight cents per acre of rangeland managed.

In contrast, average state trust lands generate nearly \$5 in revenue for each dollar spent on state grazing management. The state agencies earn more than \$1.60 per acre managed. The state’s return per acre, on grazing trust lands, is more than 20 times better than that of the federal government.

Federal performance in managing recreation is even more abysmal. The USFS and BLM lose about 75 cents on every dollar spent on recreation management. State trust lands are nearly 30 times more cost efficient, earning nearly \$7 on each management dollar spent on recreation.

The federal performance on the management of mineral extraction is a little better. Those federal agencies earn nearly \$20 for each dollar spent on resource management.

However, on average, state trust lands earn nearly \$140 in revenue for each dollar spent on mineral extraction. Once again, the states are outperforming the federal government by a margin of about seven to one.

According to the PERC report, depending upon their location, trust lands that are managed by western states generally earn from four to 10 times more per acre, for local communities, than lands held in the federal estate. And state-managed trust lands return more than 10 times more revenue, per full-time employee, than the federal estate.

At least 10 western states have passed resolutions, enacted laws, or have appropriated money for studies in order to move forward with the transfer of federal lands to state ownership and management.

It is long past time for Oregon political leaders to get serious in their efforts to address our state’s immense natural resource issues.

Please remember—if we do not stand up for rural Oregon, no one will.



Submitted Photo

Sen. Doug Whitsett represents Oregon’s senate district 28.

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

Preserving the Forest

To the Editor:

One of the many excuses to restrict use of our public lands by the Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur National Forests is that we need to “preserve” our forest for the next generation, the only problem is, the forest service isn’t doing that. The Forest Service, with assistance from their partners in the local environmental community, allow our forest to degenerate into fuel dense stands waiting to take our homes and property with it.

To preserve has many definitions – “to save from decomposition,” “To keep safe from injury,” or “To reserve for personal or special use.”

The only preserving I see is the third, to reserve for personal or special use, to which those special uses seem to be geared only to those that mean to use public lands for their personal enjoyment of “recreational use” which comes from the local environmental groups. That preser-

vation comes at the expense of our friends and families homes and future generations needs of the natural resources that are now gone forever.

I’m not sure who, or if anyone reads these letters, but in the west we are well schooled in preserving our summer fruits and vegetables. Would anyone that takes part in canning to preserve those resources, go through that work and then open up the cupboard doors and bust every jar with a hammer, and then close the doors and let the mess set?

But yet this is the mentality we are watching unfold in our mountains.

It’s time it ends and I hope that this summer brings the people of Eastern Oregon and the west together to call for sane, active, vegetative management to both the Forest Service and elected county officials who are responsible for protecting the safety, health, and welfare of our local rural communities.

John George
Bates

— CONTACT US —

The Baker County Press

PO Box 567
Baker City, Ore. 97814

Open Monday-Thursday for calls
9 AM - 4 PM
Open 24/7 for emails
Office location: TBA

Phone: 541.519.0572

TheBakerCountyPress.com

Kerry McQuisten, Publisher
Editor@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Wendee Morrissey, Advertising and Sales
Wendee@TheBakerCountyPress.com

David Conn, Advertising and Sales
David@TheBakerCountyPress.com

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President Barack Obama

202.456.1414

202.456.2461 fax

Whitehouse.gov/contact

US Sen. Jeff Merkley

503.326.3386

503.326.2900 fax

Merkley.Senate.gov

US Sen. Ron Wyden

541.962.7691

Wyden.Senate.gov

US Rep. Greg Walden

541.624.2400

541.624.2402 fax

Walden.House.gov

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown

503.378.3111

Governor.Oregon.gov

State Rep. Cliff Bentz

503.986.1460

State Sen. Ted Ferrioli

541.490.6528

Baker County

Commissioners Bill Harvey;

Mark Bennett; Tim Kerns

541.523.8200

541.523.8201

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