

OPINIONS

Behind the Green Door | Entrenched in conflict

BY CHRIS BRATT

With a new administration managing our country, more conflicts and attempts to dominate others seem to have erupted around the world. The added cultural, economic, and political struggles we face in the news every day have brought out increased negative emotions in many people and destroyed much of our ability to cooperate with our fellow humans.

I believe all this dissension is happening, despite mankind's so-called "higher intelligence," because we have chosen to live by a hierarchical system that gives little consideration to just and ethical principles. It is a political system that chooses unlimited population and economic growth, overuse of natural resources, and the accumulation of extreme wealth by individuals as the dominant ideas for living on the planet. Our health and prosperity are stuck in a win-lose model enforced throughout our world today.

I see many things wrong with our present social, economic, and political systems that may have taken us down the wrong path. We need some major policy changes and educational efforts that favor a more cooperative society

rather than one with never-ending conflict and fear. Perhaps we can develop a more harmonious society if we followed the more collaborative principles found in nature's intelligence and living systems.

But not all conflict is bad or unproductive. Conflict can be part of a process for positive change. For instance, many Applegate residents and groups are no strangers to conflict and disagreement over management of public forestland. Local conservationists have spent the past four decades struggling with federal land managers to find better ways to manage our public forests. Their efforts have resulted in less clear-cutting, less pesticide use, and less eradication of old-growth trees and other species. This long-term work by community members and others has caused the federal agencies to comply with our nation's environmental laws and has eliminated many destructive forest practices. Also, many of our community's ideas, objectives, and goals have been incorporated into regional forest planning and actions. This is the way conflict can work and bring about a collective success among all the concerned parties.

But today there seems to be no clear path to collaboration or cooperation. Regulatory changes, the extreme rigidity of some points of view, and lack of trust among participants are limiting our ability to work on issues that contribute to the greater good of all. My observations, as I watch people, organizations, and nations try to overcome conflict, reveal that those with the most power (military, political, economic, corporate, regulatory agency, etc.) have a distinct advantage in any collaborative decision-making process or action. These power players have more equipment, money, experts, and data to present in any collaborative effort. Unless the conflict-resolution process recognizes and overcomes these advantages, community concerns, beliefs, and values will be marginalized or dismissed.

A classic example of how we repeat or continue to be bogged down by conflict is taking place presently in the Applegate. Recently, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) discarded our well-known Applegate Adaptive Management Area Guide (AMA Guide) with no reason. For 20 years the AMA Guide provided many unsurpassed

public forest and public involvement opportunities throughout our watershed. After a sudden shake-up within the BLM, we were confronted with a new region-wide forest plan. In this new BLM forest plan, cutting a large volume of timber is the prime "purpose and need." This emphasis on the cutting of trees will certainly compromise other species and natural resources and undermine the public's ability to influence BLM decision-making.

Having abandoned what many of us considered a good forest management plan for a poor one, the BLM is now asking our community "to reset the conversation and develop a shared understanding of the situation." What the BLM means is, they have some set priorities that our community needs to understand and work under. Once again, the collaboration cards are stacked against us by more powerful forces. But I have the historical confidence that our community priorities will counterbalance those of the BLM.

Let me know your confidence level.

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Chris Bratt

Clean Energy Jobs a win-win solution for Applegate residents

BY ALAN JOURNET

Win-win and no-regrets solutions rarely come our way, but in the Clean Energy Jobs Bill, our valley has a chance to hit that sweet spot.

Most Applegate Valley residents know that our temperature has been climbing for decades (for more information, visit www2.usgs.gov/climate_landuse/clu_rd/nccv/viewer.asp) bringing early snowmelt and heat waves. Less obvious is the transition from high-elevation snowfall to lower-elevation rainfall, resulting in reduced snowpack and water shortages during summer and fall. Additionally, rainfall is occurring more often as heavy downpours rather than light soil-replenishing drizzle, thus stimulating floods. Together with reducing soil moisture, these drying patterns stimulate wildfire risk. Furthermore, the trends will only become more severe unless we address their root cause: climate pollution inducing global warming.

Oregon alone cannot solve the problem, since our emissions are a small proportion of national and global totals. However, we can do our share by becoming part of the

solution rather than continuing as part of the problem. Unless we do our share, we cannot urge others around the nation and the globe to help protect our beautiful corner of paradise by doing their share.

In 2007, our legislature established statewide voluntary goals for climate pollution reduction, targeting a 70 percent reduction from the state's 1990 emissions by 2050. Regrettably, Oregon's transportation industries and utility sectors have not risen to the challenge of reducing their emissions sufficiently. Thus, we're not on a trajectory to achieve our target; voluntary measures have failed!

For several years, a statewide coalition has urged the legislature to address the issue. While they have approved studies and addressed components of the problem, legislation addressing the major sectors of the economy responsible for the climate pollution has been inadequate.

A statewide coalition of climate-concerned Oregonians, including legislators and representatives of the social-environmental justice community and labor, developed a bill that would

meet the concerns of these communities while also producing meaningful pollution reductions. The result of several years of effort, the Clean Energy Jobs Bill is a no-regrets proposal that not only addresses an urgent problem but also contains critical elements that address social justice and labor concerns and provides funds to assist rural Oregon.

The essence of the proposal involves capping statewide climate pollution emissions, including emissions resulting from electricity generated out-of-state that is purchased by Oregon. The goal is to be at least at 80 percent of 1990 levels by 2050. Rather than targeting individual polluters, the bill targets entities that emit over 25,000 metric tons annually. These major polluters are required to buy allowances that will limit their permitted pollution. Entities polluting in excess of their allowances suffer a penalty, while entities not using all allowances can trade them on the open market.

The state emissions cap is lowered annually to meet interim targets with the expectation that the auction price will rise and encourage polluters to reevaluate their energy sources. The proposal is a climate pollution cap and permitting process, not a tax.

Since low-income Oregonians would be most compromised by rising utility prices, the program provides some free allowances to utilities. These allowances are returned to the pool for sale. Funds thus generated are assigned to the utility to be used to subsidize the bills of low-income customers. These utilities must still buy allowances to cover their pollution.

Polluters can meet a small proportion of their emissions reduction goals by buying offsets, though these are limited to eight percent of emissions. Offsets comprise investments in certified activities that either reduce emissions (solar or wind farms, for example) or reduce atmospheric concentration of the pollutants (such as forests or regenerative agriculture).

States enacting climate pollution caps have exhibited economic growth that equals or outpaces the economies of neighboring states. This bill will help rural Oregon and our state's economy. Southern Oregon's representatives should support this win-win legislation. Our representatives should support this proposal.

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OPINION PIECES AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Opinion pieces are limited to 700 words; letters are limited 450 words. Submissions will be edited for grammar and length. Opinion pieces **must** include publishable contact information (phone number and/or email address). All letters **must** be signed, with a full street address or PO Box and phone number. **Anonymous letters and opinion pieces will not be published.** Individual letters and opinion pieces may or may not be published.

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Email opinion pieces and letters to the editor to gater@applegater.org or mail to *Applegater*, Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc., PO Box 14, Jacksonville, OR 97530.

BORED?

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Happy Holidays to all
from the
Applegater Team.
May 2018 bring peace, joy,
and prosperity!

