

OPINION

The opinions expressed in the letters below are “your voice,” and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the *Columbia Gorge News*, its staff, publisher or advertisers.

YOUR VOICE

Pass Wildfire Safe Bill

We need the Oregon legislature to pass Senate Bill 762, the “Wildfire Safe” bill, to protect Oregon from future wildfire disasters.

Last year’s fires produced irreparable damage to homes, livestock and 1.2 million acres of land. Thousands of people had to be evacuated, and at least nine lost their lives. The damage cost us \$1.5 billion.

We can count on having wildfires in the west, and they’re getting more frequent and more intense with climate change.

SB 762 will help mitigate the risk because it:

- Invests in our communities through restoration of forests and rangelands to reduce wildfire risk.
- Adds firefighter capacity, and additional resources for wildfire response and firefighter safety.
- Establishes defensible space standards.
- Provides financial resources to protect communities and critical infrastructure.
- Creates the Oregon Wildfire Workforce Corps Program to reduce wildfire risk to communities and to provide workforce training to the next generation of land managers.

I’ve asked my elected officials, Rep. Anna Williams and Sen. Chuck Thomsen, to support SB 762, and I encourage others to do so too. We’ve already seen the need for improved wildfire safety in Oregon.

Cindy Allen
Hood River

Fire concerns

Columbia Gorge News announced state fire restrictions began on May 15, the earliest in 40 years. Most concerning was the fact that “to date, 22 human caused fires have burned more than 200 acres. The 10-year-average for this time frame is 10 fires, burning 32 acres.”

Having lived in Oregon my entire life, the news of the escalating fire season is concerning. As we see our local fire season growing in length and fires growing in force, I recognize the expanding needs of our communities. One of the vital necessities being to weatherize our communities’ homes in order to reduce people’s exposure to smoke.

Weatherizing our homes not only protects us from the elements, but also reduces our energy bills and creates jobs in home retrofitting.

I am an eager supporter of the Oregon Clean Energy Opportunity



Sunlight creates a rainbow above rocky cliffs and slopes filled with ponderosa pines above Mill Creek south of The Dalles. Spring showers have been frequent this spring, but fire danger remains high and burn bans and fire warnings are in effect throughout Central Oregon, including the Columbia River Gorge.

Mark B. Gibson photo

(OCEO) campaign, particularly House Bill 2842 Healthy Homes. The bill would support home improvements in low-income households across Oregon, including smoke filtration and other improvements that make homes more fire resistant.

Everyone deserves to have a healthy home as a refuge from bad environmental conditions. Additionally, we have Gorge community members who are energy burdened (paying more than 6 percent of monthly income on utility bills). Home upgrades can reduce family energy bills and help rural counties in Oregon, which face the highest rates of energy burden.

I really wish to highlight how our home health and efficiency affect so many areas of our lives. Weatherization is vital to Oregonians’ health when we spend \$28 million on asthma-related

hospital visits each year. Not to mention that asthma is the leading reason for missed school days.

We also need to recognize our community members who have suffered due to contracting COVID-19 and those who will be permanently affected by lung and breathing issues. Wildfire smoke in their homes should not be another worry they face.

As wildfire smoke becomes a seasonal companion, I hope to see our community disaster resilience increase and our energy burdens decrease with the passage of HB2842. With that, I ask Rep. Anna Williams and Sen. Chuck Thomsen to vote yes on HB2842.

Lisa Muñoz
Hood River

Grave error

I am writing this letter about the pressing issue of the recent conflicts

between the Palestinian people and the state of Israel. I believe that the U.S., by tacitly supporting Israel’s apparent right to defend itself but denying the same right to the Palestinian people both in Gaza and the occupied territories, is engaging in a grave error.

We are complicit in the deaths of hundreds of people (including scores of children) who have been killed by Israeli airstrikes which we have funded by providing billions of dollars of non-conditional military aid to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

The U.S. has further compounded its error by blocking the U.N. Security Council from condemning the violence and calling for a ceasefire.

The U.S. has been biased towards Israel in this conflict for years, and President Biden’s claim that we are neutral rings hollow when he has

made clear that the U.S. believes that Israel has a right to defend itself free from criticism, but that any Palestinians who do so should be labeled as terrorists. The U.S. has clearly chosen a side, and our government needs to immediately take a step back, cancel its military support for Israel (or at least place reasonable conditions on it) and reevaluate the situation from an unbiased perspective that respects the rights of both Palestinians and Israelis equally.

Gabriel Roth
White Salmon

BEHIND THE SCENES

On bylines and staffing changes at Columbia Gorge News

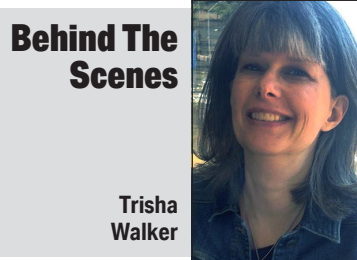
■ By Trisha Walker
Columbia Gorge News

HAPPY JUNE, COLUMBIA Gorge News readers! Here’s a column that I’ve been meaning to write since April. We’ve undergone a few staffing changes recently and will undergo a few more this month — which makes it a good time to go over bylines.

Bylines, for those not familiar with the term, are the namelines that indicate who has written a story that appears in our paper: For example, “By Trisha Walker.” Underneath is the byline title — not always, but generally, and I’ll explain why in a minute — that indicates where the writer is associated. In my case, that would be *Columbia Gorge News*, as I am a full-time staff writer.

All of us who are part of the regular *Columbia Gorge News* staff have “Columbia Gorge News” under our bylines, so we are easy to pick out. Of course, you can also see our names in the staff box that always appears on A4 — our contact information is also listed for those wishing to comment on a story or suggest an idea.

Slight tangent: Send in your tips!



Behind The Scenes

Trisha Walker

We rely on those. It’s not uncommon for someone to ask me why one of our staff didn’t cover a particular event, and the answer is usually that we didn’t know about it. Mostly I think this is because we’re the news, right?, so people assume we magically know everything that’s going on. I am sorry to say this, but we are *not* magic. I know. I’m disappointed by that too.

Back on topic: Sometimes you will see the byline title, “For Columbia Gorge News.” This means content has come from one of our freelance writers. There has been some confusion on this, with people thinking the “For” indicates “paid content” — as in, commercially-produced.

We rely on freelancers because we are a small staff, but they operate in the same way we all do; that is,

with the same journalistic principles. The only difference is that they are used on an as-needed basis. This comes in handy because we don’t have enough regular staff to attend all of the meetings or sports events occurring in our five-county readership area. Most of our freelancers live in the Gorge, as does all of our regular staff — and most of our freelancers have worked for *Hood River News* or *The Dalles Chronicle* in the past.

Sometimes, you’ll see “Staff report, Columbia Gorge News,” as the byline/byline title. This is used when multiple press releases are combined, or additional information is added to a press release. These reports don’t typically involve original reporting, but do reflect the input and judgment of staff to a degree that readers need to be aware of the full source of the story. Additional information is sometimes added at the end in italics to further explain sources and any staff member associated with contributing to the report.

Recently we’ve made an effort to identify where our press releases come from — who has written and submitted the content. Because this is a new policy, not all press releases

have bylines and/or byline titles, but for those that submit regularly, we do make it a point. I estimate 99 percent of our press releases come from local agencies or groups wishing to promote an event or inform the wider community about the work they do. This is why you’ll see a “For Washington Gorge Action Programs” or “For Hood River County School District.” It’s another way we can clarify for our readers where the content is from.

There are some cases where you just see a byline and no byline title. These are generally on our reoccurring columns — for example, those written by our Lyle and Glenwood columnists. Contact information is included at the end of each column to identify them as such.

This also sometimes happens on content submitted for our opinion pages, such as “Another Voice” submissions: A byline identifies the writer, and a brief explanation at the end gives additional information regarding their association with the topic. Again, this is another way to clarify for our readers where our content comes from.

As I’m sure you have noticed, we are down a couple of staff writers, with both Emily Fitzgerald and

Kirby Neumann-Rea leaving this year for new publications. It has taken us a while to replace them — housing is an issue local businesses struggle with when attempting to attract new hires, and we are no different. But we will have two new staff writers to introduce to you soon: Noah Noteboom, a 2021 graduate of University of Oregon (and a Hood River Valley High School graduate who previously interned at *Hood River News*), and Alana Lackner, a 2021 graduate of Washington State University. Both come to us with journalism backgrounds and have worked on their respective university newspapers while finishing their degrees. We will introduce them soon.

All right, that’s all I have to say, really, but LisaAnn Kawachi, our copyeditor, likes a clearcut ending, so I will at least try: Bylines and byline titles are used by newspapers to demystify where content comes from, be that from a staff writer or freelancer, columnist or agency. And if you have any further questions about content, you are always welcome to contact any of us for further clarification. (How’s that, LisaAnn?)

Regional news for the Gorge

Columbia Gorge News

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