

The Eyes Have It

Different ways of seeing

Recently the Bureau of Land Management published their proposal to spray a lot more herbicides on a lot more BLM lands each year throughout 17 western states. It's their major response to "invasive species." While I've been writing comments reminding the BLM that they're still ignoring a good proposal 43 organizations submitted to them three years ago, which would require a lot less herbicide spraying, I've also been thinking about what an invasive species is. Which has lead me also to think about how different people see the world.

If you type in "invasive species definition" on the web, you'll find this definition: "a species that has moved into an area and reproduced so aggressively that it has replaced some of the original species." Some examples you are probably familiar with include the Japanese kudzu vine in the U.S. South, European rabbits in Australia; and the Northeast U.S. bullfrog, Eurasian blackberry, South American nutria, and Caucasus Mountain ivy that are replacing native species in Eugene.



The trouble with ecologists and biologists is that we realize humans are one species among millions of other species, such as kudzu vine and rabbits. In fact, humans are a species that has moved into areas throughout *most* of the world and reproduced so aggressively that we have replaced *many* of the original species. Which means we're a highly aggressive invasive species.

I teach a two-week field course in ecology every couple of years for Whitman College students just as they are embarking on a semester-long camping trip throughout the western states to study ecology, creative writing, and environmental politics. In one of the first exercises I ask them to list some words that describe how ecologists, creative writers, and politicians might "see" 1) a patch of grass; and 2) a human. For instance, an ecologist might see whether the grass is a native bunch grass with spaces for other native species in between, or an exotic mat-forming grass as in our lawns. The creative writer might see the grass's color as a setting for a mood, or how it is moving in the wind over a grave. A rural politician might see "forage" for cows; an urban politician might see an empty place to expand the urban boundary.

As for humans, an ecologist might see an omnivore, a fire-suppressor, a restorationist, a dam-builder, a burrower to remove selected metals. A creative writer might see a desperate housewife, a politician's fall, or two gay cowboys. A politician might see a human's wealth, zip code, or right to health care.

One of the best, wisest things we humans do is arrange for problem-solving tables at which diverse types of "seeing" are present. The first challenge is getting those who have the most economic and/or political power to accept 1) that a problem exists; 2) a table process; and/or 3) inclusion at the table of those who see the world differently from them.

We're at the brink of setting such a table in our community regarding our 21-year old standoff regarding the West Eugene Parkway, the four-lane highway that would be built through the West Eugene Wetlands. Mayor Piercy for Eugene and David Cox for the Federal Highway Administration took the first formal step, when they said they would jointly fund such an approach with the help of a government organization of professional table-setters, the U.S. Institute of Environmental Conflict Resolution. The Metropolitan Planning Commission, made up of representatives of numerous local government agencies, have given their wary, tentative nod to the idea. Even the Oregon Department of Transportation is moving into "yes." Some longtime parkway and anti-parkway advocates have already begun such discussions together.

A big challenge now is to gain trust that the table will actually include all types of eyes — those who, prompted by the words "West Eugene Parkway," variously see threats to or opportunities for an endangered butterfly, decent transportation, open space recreation, highway connections, truck routes, profits, silence, peak oil, next year, or future generations.

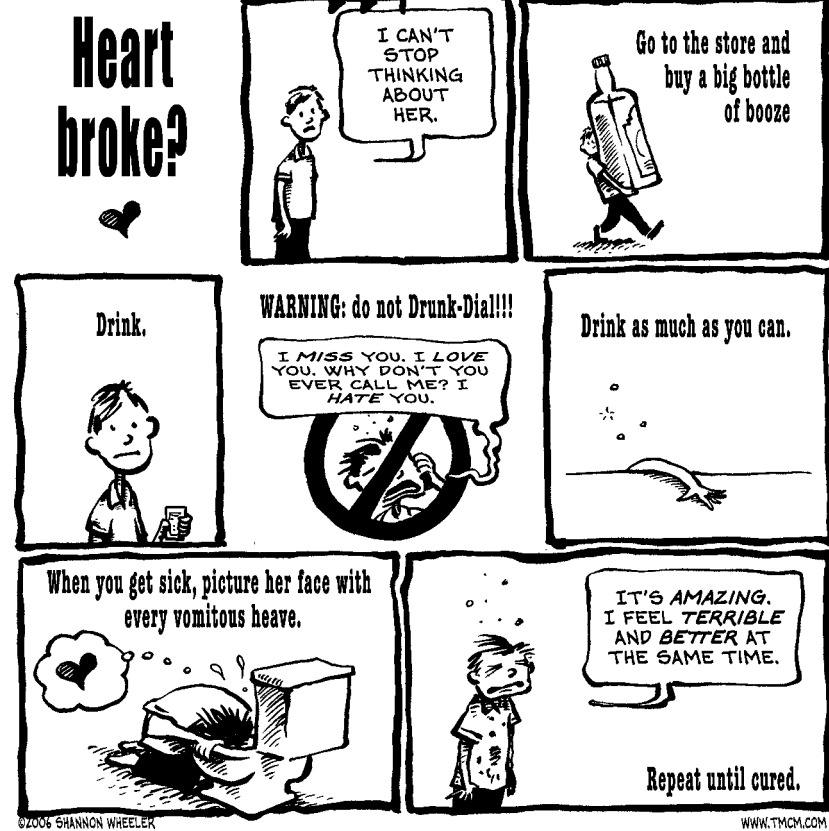
The ultimate challenge will be for all those eyes to rethink how we address finite resources and fashion West Eugene transportation solutions that gain broad acceptance in our community that is weary of two decades of humans barking at each other from separate corners of the room.

If we succeed, the ecologists, creative writers, and politicians can then tell their stories of what we took care of in this community.

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How to Be Happy (AKA TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN) BY SHANNON WHEELER



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ARTS BE GONE

Eugene may be the "World's Greatest City for the Arts and Outdoors," but it looks increasingly like it's about to become an Auschwitz for Artists. City management appears anxious to do the bidding of stone-hearted developers by unleashing a squadron of bulldozers to execute the Blitzkrieg of Broadway. Hungry for advertising revenues from big corporate outfits — such as The Gap, Hooters and Chili's — the Ministry of Propaganda (aka *The Register-Guard*) goose-steps right along.

Do any of our leaders who promote this assault on cultural diversity realize that the home-grown downtown businesses they propose to wipe out are among the very ones providing employment and expressionistic venues for a bevy of local artists?

Apparently, the big vision calls for a hotel to be constructed on the current site of Jameson's pub (formerly Café Paradiso). A better location for this hotel would be in the dilapidated space at the southwest corner of Broadway and Willamette. Tourists could stroll right out the lobby doors and have themselves photographed standing in front of downtown's most vivid landmark — the half-baked mural fronting the excavated pit that was once occupied by Woolworth's. This location would also move the tourists closer to the Bus Rapid Transit, should they care to cross the border into America and pay a visit to Springfield. Don't forget your passport.

*Tom Tracey
Eugene*

NO-GROW CITY

Alan Pittman's news brief "Questionable City Survey" once again presents the typical ignorant, one-sided and paradoxical demands of government. I'd like to pose some counterpoints to his questions.

Should Eugene spend \$150 million on a new City Hall? Good question. Do you want the Police Department, currently a large tenant of City Hall, to be crushed by the seismic

cally inadequate structure in the case of a major earthquake? Has Pittman built a commercial building recently?

Forty percent of the respondents think the city is growing too fast. How many of those 40 percent have moved here in the last five years? How many of the 41 percent who think that the city is doing a below-average job managing growth have anything to compare it to?

Obviously, Pittman agrees with them.

Does he understand that if you create a city that is nice, looks good and has jobs, you can't really stop people from moving here? Does he want Eugene to be a great place to live but horrible place to move to? People are going to move here whether we like it or not. And, when people move into Eugene, they pay 4J or Bethel taxes which go to schools, whether they have kids in tow or not!

Is there waste in the city government? There probably is. Here's the catch: Is this "independent city auditor" going to save more than this position would cost? In addition, has Pittman considered that the city spends a lot of money on salary and benefits to run the programs his elected officials vote for? Does he understand that the "total compensation package" is actually below market? This means that some employees could get an equivalent job that pays, in some cases, 20 to 30 thousand dollars more. People want to work in a place that values them, and the city, with its compensation package, does a fantastic job of that. It's a hard job balancing Pittman's concern about waste with the opposite issue of attracting and retaining the best (and most efficient) employees.

Pittman's quandaries are as old as civilization and his solutions are unachievable ideals based in euphoric recall. There are lots of people asking these questions already. How about Pittman offering some tangible solutions rather than "make Eugene a great city that doesn't grow"?

*Jeff Ozvold
Eugene*