

Keeping Off the Pounds

Flying around mindlessly doesn't do it

With little sense of sacrifice, I've turned down the water heater, switched to florescent lighting and convinced my husband we could survive with one vehicle (mine). I would have no problem keeping off the pounds of carbon dioxide, if not for my pesky proclivity towards plane travel.

Temptation One:

My family plans Thanksgiving and reunions a year in advance in order to coordinate the far-flung branches of the family. To gather, most of us have to travel. Oddly, I actually like spending time with my relatives, despite the fact that I've moved hundreds of miles away from them.

Temptation Two:

Growing up soaked in sunshine, I only sometimes love the Oregon rain. Come mid-winter, I get a hankering for warm natural light on my bare skin. Typically, the only way to get sun on more than your face around here is to head east and then risk frostbite by removing an item of clothing for a few seconds.

Temptation Three:

I was raised with the belief that exploring the globe is the ultimate in pleasure, learning and adventure. Moreover, as a direct descendent of two workaholics, I sometimes struggle to relax at home.

My point? Aside from the blow to my budget, I can drum up plenty of reasons to hop on a plane to a multitude of destinations.

But this past holiday season, we tried a new tack. Because in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, plane travel is just about the most impactful thing any one of us can do. Although I now enjoy line drying my clothes in the summer and count on my daily bike commute to clear my head and move my blood, multiple flights a year shoot my emissions right back up, like a mushroom cloud of carbon dioxide injected directly into the atmosphere, lingering for the next century.

Imagine for a moment that each human being on the planet is only allowed to emit a set level of greenhouse gases, as is under consideration in the UK. Why? Many scientists say that to avoid catastrophic impacts related to climate change, we'll have to cut our emissions by 65 to 85 percent of current global levels.

Fast.

If we all make that cut from current levels, Americans' annual allotment would come out to about seven tons of carbon per person, Brits closer to three tons and your average Indian down to a measly quarter ton. Clearly, a globally equitable cap on carbon emissions would necessitate even more drastic cuts for Americans.

To put these figures into perspective, each passenger can blow a ton of carbon in one round trip flight across the country, with the altitude magnifying the effect of the emissions. The average Oregonian drives 12,000 miles a year, using up more than half of their hypothetical carbon allocation, depending on what they drive and with how many people.

Although our country does not seem politically on the verge of restricting individual greenhouse gas emissions, I feel I've got some carbs to cut.

This year I'm in training. Despite requests for visits from friends and family, Steve and I avoided committing to far-flung holiday travel. We checked the weather report and headed out of the rainforest towards the sun, albeit in "the Pug," our gasoline powered steed. We strapped on snowshoes, enjoyed hot springs, the mountains and high plateau, and spent time with friends close to home.

This leaves me extremely far from perfect, considering an abundance of past travel, and that which I'm sure to do in the future. And, of course, the two of us driving around southeastern Oregon has its own carbon tag. We stayed in much closer range, however, than we would have by plane, and we shared the ride. All told, our collective emissions were about a fifth of a ton, or about 15 percent of what they would have been with our original plan to visit friends and family in Southern California.

Besides, a successful diet doesn't start with cutting out imported chocolate completely. You start by eliminating those treats you can live without having, like full fat cream in your coffee, or, for Steve and me this year, a pricey flight out of town just for fun.

Sarah Mazze is a recent graduate of UO with double masters degrees in journalism and science (environmental studies).



Molly is dead. She can't hit the streets, but she implores us from the grave. Don't let them take your power, I hear her saying to us. This is our task. We must do the hard, messy work as responsible, patriotic citizens.

She also said to have fun doing it.

*Michelle Holman
Deadwood*

UNFAIR TAX

Thankfully Measure 20-114, the punitive, regressive Lane County income tax initiative, was defeated Nov. 7. But now, the same folks who tried to pass this income tax increase are at it again for the May ballot.

Only Lane County will be hit with this so-called public safety tax. This income tax is ill-conceived and will hurt ordinary Lane County citizens with lower- and middle-class incomes. Oregon's personal income tax itself is not only an extremely regressive tax, but is in fact abusive to lower- and middle-income families. Many people in Lane County have no health care and haven't enough to eat, even with full-time jobs.

I say, get rid of personal income tax altogether in Oregon, like in Washington. Institute a dedicated 1 percent sales tax to cover public health care and medicine. The state needs to fund recovery centers for addiction, instead of incarcerations in jails and prison. At the same time, institute a 4 percent sales tax on merchandise, not food, for the general fund, and raise the fees fairly on tourism and luxury items, and tax the out-of-state corporations on their profits here in Oregon. These are responsible and fair ways of raising taxes. Personal income tax is not fair and responsible way to raise revenue in the state.

*Carol Roberts
Eugene*

WE WON'T EVEN NOTICE

One would judge, based on the headline and hysterical tone of Alan "Chicken Little" Pittman's article (1/25 cover story) about Measure 37, "Looming Sprawl: Will Measure 37 get fixed before it devours Oregon?" that the world is coming to an end or that the entire state of Oregon is going to be paved over. Nothing could be further from the truth.

SILENCE OF THE LIMBS

Driving down Jefferson and 18th Avenue, again I saw more grand, beautiful trees marked for death at the hand of the city of Eugene.

The city is intent on systematically killing more and more of these pioneer century trees. Obviously the process will not stop until all these trees die at the hand of the chainsaw.

The livability of the city is maintained

drawing as therapy by harvey dickson



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