

The old way of thinking is that we should destroy the forest to save the trees. Or in this case, the counties. A new vision would see the value of our state's forest lands in clean air and water, wildlife habitat, carbon storage to help mitigate climate change, and the intrinsic beauty that beckons us to live here.

Other viable county funding options exist beyond clear-cutting public forest lands, such as an equitable timber tax on industrial forest lands, an export tax on raw logs, consolidating BLM with the Forest Service, and fixing the broken property tax system in Oregon. Congressman DeFazio should take a breath, drop his present plan,

and begin anew with a better vision.

*Benton Elliott
Eugene*

SMART METERS

EW has covered the \$50 million EWEB smart meter project with one feature story and two opposing points of view articles. Barely covered though is a subject very important to customers: cost.

The savings professed by Roger Gray, the head of EWEB, includes 15,000 gallons of gas the re-trained meter readers will not use. But by my calculations that means they have been driving over 100 miles a day to read meters. Unlikely.

The high estimate range of the project will probably be low. That is, the project will cost us more, not less, than \$50 million dollars, and each residence will pay at least \$500 for the meter installation.

EWEB recently offered to reduce the burden on customers by "paying for them itself." This is very strange, but the offer is to finance them, use bonds or reserve funds. I do hope the officers at EWEB understand that all of these methods involve using our money. There is no cash cow or secret source of money. These methods hide the cost from us.

This will be a huge outlay and that is why we need to continue to ask just what

we are getting for our money. Retrained workers? Usage information? These little lies cover up the fact we are all going to pay more for something we do not need.

Benefits will trickle down? Only in the sense that we are being pissed on and only get the trickle of that. That's what it feels like to be governed by your utility, not the other way around.

*Michael Lee
Eugene*

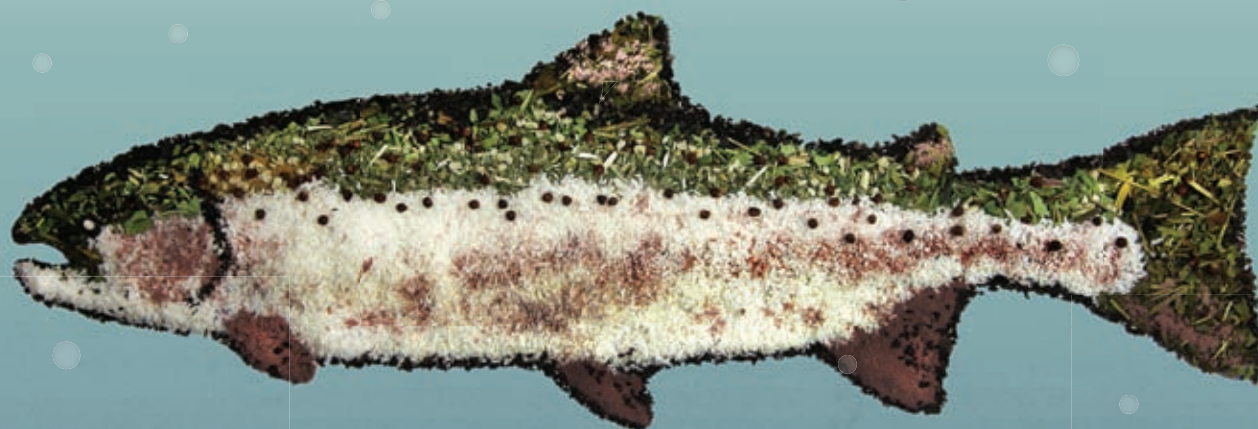
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