

In addition to funding \$5 billion to fight the Islamic State, the 2015 bill also includes unrelated-to-defense public lands packages, some of which have drawn the ire of environmentalists. The 2015 NDAA gives land in the Tonto National Forest, including an area sacred to the Apache, to the Australian Rio Tinto company to be mined for copper. Other land swaps were greeted more positively, like expanding the Oregon Caves National Monument. — *Daemion Lee*

HOMELESS CAMP CLEANUP TO BEGIN

To some river-lovers it's the scariest place in Eugene: a longtime homeless camp along the Willamette River strewn with soggy mattresses and moldy rugs, used needles, bike parts, food packaging, wet books, even an old TV set. Trash and worse from campers have been collecting for years between the railroad tracks and the river, and a cleanup project is about to begin now that the camp has been abandoned (see photos on our website).

The site is behind the new student housing project being

built on Garden Avenue near Walnut Station. The heavily wooded land belongs to Union Pacific Railroad, and is not directly within the jurisdiction of the city, county or university.

Willamette Riverkeeper is coordinating the cleanup effort with the cooperation of Union Pacific, Lane County and assistance from the Oregon Department of State Lands for trash containers and hauling. But EWEB Commissioner John Brown says he will be writing personal checks to pay for a Lane County Sheriff's Work Crew Friday and other outright expenses costing thousands of dollars. Volunteers with riverboats will haul away tons of trash. Brown considered hiring a helicopter to ease the workload, but after revisiting the area this week, he says the area has too many trees in the way.

Michelle Emmons of Willamette Riverkeeper headed up the successful Great Willamette Clean Up Oct. 4 that removed tons of trash from some 200 miles of the Willamette and its tributaries, but this particular area by campus, still occupied at the time, was much more than the volunteers could handle. Emmons is coordinating this cleanup as well.

"This camp is out of sight and out of mind," Brown says. "The bottom line is: Why bitch about it? Do something about it — and at the end of the day there will hopefully be

other community members who will step up."

Brown is critical of city government and its reluctance to approve more authorized camping areas. He says investing in legal campsites and providing trash service and toilets is more humane and would also reduce the kind of expensive riparian damage that he sees along the river in several areas in Eugene. "This doesn't have to happen," he says.

Emmons says the site is too hazardous for volunteers to just show up and help with the cleanup. Used hypodermic needles are everywhere, the ground is muddy and slippery and the bushes have been used as toilets for years. But Willamette Riverkeeper does train volunteers for river projects, and money and in-kind donations are always welcome. See willametteriverkeeper.org or call Emmons at 913-4318. — *Ted Taylor*

CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

We reviewed author Chloe Caldwell's *Women* in our Winter Reading issue, and in our enthusiasm to promote Oregon authors we called Caldwell, "Portland-born." Whoops, Caldwell was born in upstate New York, but she tells us she did live in Portland for a short time and was a cashier at Powell's Books.

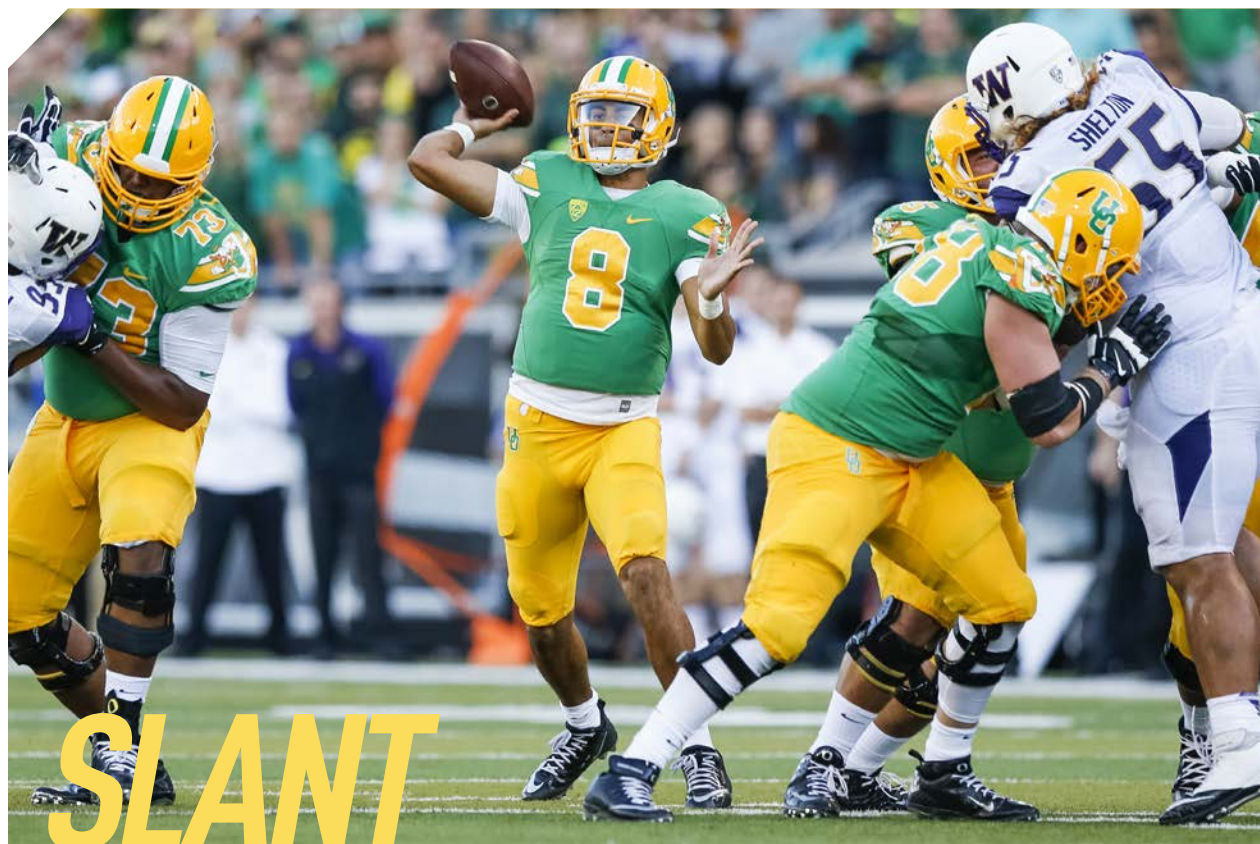


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• **Salem's daily paper** is in trouble for littering sidewalks and driveways with pesky free newspapers in unrecyclable plastic bags, even when residents call repeatedly and demand they stop. The ad-heavy papers also build up at vacant homes and apartments, a potential invitation to burglars and vandals. The Salem City Council is threatening to fine the *Salem Statesman Journal* \$250 for every violation — unless the *SJ* only delivers to doorsteps and stops unwanted deliveries. Give *The Register-Guard* credit for briefly running a short blurb about the Salem paper's quandary on its website Dec. 8 under "Northwest Now," but the story did not show up in print. Maybe it's in the *R-G's* free paper this week, stuffed into an unrecyclable green plastic bag. Check your driveway or bushes.

• The coastal old growth of the **Elliott State Forest** is a little closer to being protected after a Dec. 10 meeting of the State Land Board in which it was decided to try to sell the forest to a public buyer or public-private partnership. The board (Gov. John Kitzhaber, Secretary of State Kate Brown and State Treasurer Ted Wheeler) and the Department of State Lands took into account a wellspring of public comment that called for the public forest to be protected, not logged. The rub, of course, is that the timber is ostensibly logged to pay for public schools, but logging was actually losing money, which led to a previous much-criticized plan to sell the land to private timber companies. Selling the 92,000-acre forest to keep it in public hands hopefully keeps two threatened marbled murrelets alive with one stone — it stays open and unlogged and the state is no longer mandated to use it as a revenue-generator for schools, or as conservation group Cascadia Wildlands likes to call it, "clearcuts for kids."

• Here's another tip for a **last-minute gift** that benefits our friends at the Farmers Market. It's a CD from the owners of the excellent Locomotive restaurant, which closed a few years ago. The \$10 CD includes hundreds of recipes, tips and instructions for making those memorable vegetarian meals. Buy at the Farmers Market at the Fairgrounds from 10 am to 5 pm Saturday, Dec. 20, and from 11 am to 5 pm Sunday, Dec. 21.

• Parting is such sweet sorrow: Since **Ducks quarterback Marcus Mariota** won the Heisman last week — and won it decisively — he ceased to be just another great UO athlete. If he wasn't already, Mariota is now a national celebrity, evidenced by his immediate appearance on network television Dec. 15 when he read the Top Ten list on "Late Night with David Letterman." Letterman introduced Mariota as "a good-looking kid" from "your University of Oregon Ducks," and he wasn't talking to us, Eugene. Reading the cues, Mariota joked, "To heck with the NFL, I'm going on *Dancing with the Stars*." Not likely.

• Eugene is looking at expanding its **urban growth boundary** (UGB) again and every time we do, we lose density, and developers and land speculators grin all the way to the bank while taxpayers pick up the tab for infrastructure costs that are never covered by system development charges. Sprawl increases driving and reduces walkability. Some perks can be found in the city staff recommendations following the 5-year Envision Eugene process: a couple of new parks and

land for Bethel schools. But more residential land? More industrial land? Why sprawl when we have abundant residential infill opportunities plus vacant industrial land within the UGB? It was just a few years ago that the Eugene Comprehensive Lands Analysis found that "Eugene has about 434 acres of industrial land on 39 sites in excess of the demands for industrial land." Manufacturing is actually barely growing in Oregon and the old Hynix plant stands empty. City meetings and a public forum on UGB expansion are coming up in mid-January. Time to ask some tough questions: What are other options to meet state planning guidelines? How real is the population projection of 34,000 new residents over 20 years? Why do we encourage population growth? And how do we pay for sprawl?

• We spotted **another illegal homeless camp** deep in the woods near the river. No need to wonder where Whoville residents and other homeless folks with nowhere to go or who use alcohol and drugs end up. Out of sight but still members of our community.