

Never Make the Same Mistake Twice

DON'T WIPE OUT THE WOLVES

Earlier this year, Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill affirming the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's decision to remove wolves from the state Endangered Species Act and essentially block judicial review. Although the delisting decision and subsequent passage and signing of HB 4040 dealt wolf recovery a blow, the wolf conservation and management plan ultimately determines the fate of this keystone species.

Eight years ago there were no wolves in Oregon. Twenty-five years ago there were no wolves in the West. There are currently not just wolves in Idaho, Washington and Oregon, but now in northern California as well.

Ecologically, wolves have been described as ecosystem engineers, keystone species and natural "vaccines" against disease spread. Through their predation of deer and elk, they decrease browse time, which allows appropriate plants to grow; they increase the available scavenger food source for a wide variety of other animals; they decrease the abundance of destructive mesopredators (raccoons, coyotes, skunks, etc.) and they thin otherwise healthy herds of elk and deer of chronic wasting disease.

Ecologically, wolf conservation is smart. In extrapolating how much time, energy and money I spent in the past couple years trying to photograph wolves in the wild, I imagine conserving this species makes economic sense as well. The argument that wolves are devastating livestock operations and harming humans doesn't stand the test of time. Sure, there are some livestock losses, and in those rare instances that they occur, ranchers are compensated. However, the depredation of livestock does not outweigh the benefits wolves bring to our ecosystem. It's baffling to me that the "big bad wolf" myth is still perpetuated and is ultimately creating more fear and anger.

The modern human and wolf interaction is novel. With the policies we enact and the support or opposition we provide, we collectively decide how we want to live with other species and within our ecosystem. Wolf protection and management is an experiment for future large carnivore recovery in this country and globally. For the last 10,000 years humans have done a terrific job of killing the monsters of our nightmares and we are left with a world bereft of these powerful animals. I'm pleased to see that as a society we're investing in wildlife and fostering recovery for the many predator species we nearly wiped out: grizzly bears, wolverines, jaguars and mountain lions.

We can continue to deny protections or we can learn from our mistakes and coexist better. Wolves embody not just the image of wilderness, but also the definition of a natural system working. If we make decisions that give them that chance, we are not only supporting a healthy environment, but also contributing to the natural legacy of our state. Wolves deserve the strongest protections we can offer, and Oregon's current and future generations deserve an intact ecosystem to explore and appreciate. I believe it is possible to have both.

Taylor Parker is a conservation professional who has worked on habitat restoration and rare species projects globally for the last 13 years and is a contributing writer for the Endangered Species Coalition.



DISASTROUS DERAILMENT

It was encouraging to read in *The Register-Guard* Saturday that Union Pacific plans to spend \$34.6 million on Oregon railroad lines. Unfortunately, this plan was late, as a train loaded with volatile Bakken crude oil derailed, caught fire and leaked oil into the Columbia River near Mosier, Oregon, on Friday, June 3.

In January 2014, transportation safety agencies in Canada and the U.S. called for railroads to analyze the risks of moving crude oil in outdated DOT111 rail tank cars that were designed to carry corn syrup. Deborah Hersman, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board, said the agency "is concerned that major loss of life, property damage and environmental consequences can occur" and "safety regulations need to catch up to this new reality."

There has been a 400-percent increase in rail oil shipments since 2005, and 26 oil trains have been involved in major fires in the last decade. The new CPC 1232 tank cars have thicker shells, bulkhead and valve protection but have been involved in the most recent derailments and fires.

The Union Pacific rail lines that run through Eugene carrying crude oil in unit trains (100 or more cars of the same product) to California refineries are not part of the multimillion-dollar track and bridge upgrades.

Sadly, these disastrous derailments and fires of this volatile fossil fuel product shipped through residential and businesses throughout Oregon and nationwide are indiscriminate and can happen anywhere and anytime. Just ask the residents of Mosier.

*Jim Neu
Eugene*

SMALL-TOWN FEEL

I like the restriping of Willamette Street. It doesn't seem to be as frantic as it was. Now driving is more relaxed, and there is a small-town feel. I think it will be beneficial for local shops.

*Jan Gardner
Eugene*

OUR KIDS MATTER

Almost 130,000 Oregon voters have signed the IP 28 petition and have said enough is enough. The time has come for Walmart, Comcast, Apple and other multinational corporations making billions in Oregon to pay their fair share in taxes.

For too long average Oregonians have been subsidizing these corporations that have been reaping record profits and benefiting from the lowest overall business tax in the nation.

Oregon children deserve schools that are adequately funded, class sizes that are manageable, a school year that is not the shortest in the nation and classes that engage our kids, challenge them and help them graduate.

In 2000, legislature created the Quality Education Commission, whose task was to figure out the adequate funding for our public schools. Oregon voters passed Ballot Measure 1 that year, directing the legislature to deliver appropriate funding. They have failed. Sixteen years later, we are more than \$1 billion short of the goal

of proper funding of our schools.

We can't wait for Salem to do the right thing anymore. In November, the voters, not the politicians, will decide the fate of our schools.

Big business, multinational corporations and the right-wing, out-of-state billionaires are pledging to spend more than \$25 million to defeat this measure. They will try to confuse voters with propaganda and outright lies.

We will not be fooled. In November, we will send a clear message that our kids matter and they deserve schools we can all be proud of.

*Pete Mandrapa
Eugene*

TALK ABOUT BIKES

I think the letter from Robert C. Laney about the rude bicyclist [Letters, 6/2] exemplifies the disconnect between bicyclists and drivers of motorized vehicles in our community.

The fact is that most of our infrastructure was not designed for use by both motorized vehicles and bicycles at the same time. Drivers and bicyclists feel uncomfortable operating their vehicles, which vary greatly in size, maneuverability and speed, in the same space.

This results in drivers feeling intimidated by what is often an unanticipated presence in their path, and bicyclists feeling intimidated by larger vehicles that are potentially life-threatening.

Rather than putting the blame on the other person, let's communicate about how we can make a community that supports both motorized and non-motorized transportation.

*Richard Griscom
Eugene*

SMART METERS

I recently learned from an EWEB board member that they've (secretly) finished installing all the collectors/transmitters around Eugene and have installed at least 200 smart meters on "non-residences" so far — things like billboards and new streetlights, etc. He made sure to note that EWEB was using the "opt-in" option for permission to install.

To this day, there is still not one word in EWEB's newsletter about any aspects of this \$26 million program since inception! There are so many questions needing answers after numerous public meetings demanding information.

For example, EWEB has not chosen to tell us how often different meters transmit, at what frequencies, power outputs, locations of collectors, etc. While they've been rolling this out, why are they hiding the details? EWEB is a public entity!

Hundreds of thousands of these meters have been removed in California in two major class-action lawsuits, as well as in other states, and they've been banned in some countries after massive rollouts because of unexplained fires, many health issues and exorbitant bills after installation.

This is the same radiation as 4G wi-fi, but on *steroids*. Collectors might be right outside your bedroom now! You have the option of turning your phone off — not so with smart meters!

There is also the question of security