

Losing our public lands? Never happen in Oregon?



The recent take over of the Wildlife Refuge near Burns has captured the attention of the nation. But, creditable conservationist say groups like the Bundys, called Sagebrush Rebels, are not the threat to our public lands.

Award winning writer, and conservationist, Hall Herring has said, "The recent movement to do away with the concept of federal lands has nothing to do with freedom. It's just the opposite, and would change hunting and fishing as we know it."

Here is the scenario: the federal government owns millions of acres of public land, ranging from arid sagebrush, to pristine mountains and headwaters of spectacular streams.

These vast areas have been

treasures to anglers, hunters and recreationists for decades. The head waters of most of our major streams are on public lands.

Managing these lands cost money; fire control, road management, grazing fees and control, and others.

So, now comes the push to transfer the lands to the states. Hall adds, "This comes from slick-minded politicians, dreaming of riches and transforming our country that will bring us into line with the rest of the world where only the elite and the very lucky have access to wildlife, open spaces, rivers and lakes, and the kind of freedom we have for so long taken for granted."

"Never happen" you say. Let's take a glimpse. My wife

and I recently took a drive in the old Valsetz area. I have heard many stories over the years about the Black Rock Country, and its great deer hunting. In fact, years ago I did a magazine article on a state record buck that was shot in that unit.

We spent most of the day exploring the beautiful area. At least 90 percent of it is gated off by Weyerhaeuser Lumber.

The Siletz River Canyon is one of the most pristine summer steelhead rivers in the state. Hardy anglers have climbed the steep walls to enjoy solitude and great fishing experiences. I learned recently that it will soon be gated off by Weyerhaeuser.

Large corporations will continue to buy up lands and close them to the public. A few have initiated "pay for play" programs. Sound like Europe? Lands in the Cascades have been open to the public for years, but are now closed.

Some areas are patrolled. Get out of your vehicle, and step off the road, you will/can be cited for trespassing. Criminal trespass is a serious charge.

Never happen in Oregon? Look at the northeastern corner of the state. Mark Hemstreet, owner of Shilo Inns, purchased thousands of acres of prime deer and elk habitat, he met with the local community and assured them they would not lose access to these properties. Shortly thereafter, they were posted, fenced and patrolled. (By the way, they are now facing foreclosure.)

Nature Conservancy also purchased a huge parcel of prime elk and deer habitats. Same promise of hunting rights. It has basically become an elk refuge while angry hunters drive past and dream of a trophy. It's all posted, and they sell a few tags. Their staff tells tag holders which animal to shoot.

Some will say this is crying

wolf. But, what if China decides they want, 100,000 acres of headwaters of one of our pristine rivers, in lieu of a major debt we owe them?

A resources strapped country, like Saudi Arabia, with lots of cash, decides they want to buy huge parcels of a state's public land, for their royalty to hunt? Ted Turner, the Mormon Church, and others have done so.

Let's take a look at what has already happened in states:

Our Elliot State Forest was originally granted 3.4 million acres. The state has sold 92,000 acres. Precedents of states selling off lands that have been granted to them by the federal government have been set.

Nevada-has sold off 3,000.

Utah-sold off over 50 percent.

Idaho-sold 41 percent Wisconsin-sold 10,000.

Colorado-only 20 percent of state lands are open to the public for hunting and fishing.

Herring says, "There is indeed a carefully crafted movement under way to rob Americans of their public lands."

One of the key leaders of the movement is Utah State Representative Ken Ivory, head of the American Lands Council. He said, "Transferring federal public land to the states would be like getting our hands on the Louisiana Purchase."

Herring urges every person who loves and uses our public lands to let their congressperson know they will oppose any more loss of those lands.

I need to add; on the Valsetz trip, when we did find roads we could access, it was sickening to see the garbage left. Mostly by shooters.

Piles of spent shotgun shells, riddled targets, and beverage containers. Pigs. We have a lot of pigs that make it difficult for others to enjoy our natural resources. See this and you can understand the reason for gates.

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"She's a phenomenal athlete," Handley said of Ewert. "For us it's trying to get her caught up as far as basketball skills go. Her natural instincts

are really good. She doesn't have those bad habits so she's picked it up really quick. She's going to get minutes and definitely play at the varsity level."

Handley said Hawley, who he compares to Douutt, and Lao, the fastest kids he's ever coached, will both be key to

McNary's aggressive defense.

"We're going to try to be more aggressive, more full court stuff," Handley said. "We were a good defensive team last year. This year we should be better. We have nine girls who are all incredibly athletic and quick, all love to play de-

fense. We have the potential to be one of the best defensive teams in the state."

Handley also expects the GVC to be deeper this season with South Salem and West Salem being the toughest competition. He suspects Forest Grove will surprise teams as

well.

"It's a different look," he said. "It used to be where there were a couple of games you just kind of assumed you'd get some wins. It's not going to be the case this year. I think every game is going to be a battle. Everybody is a lot better than

they have been in years past."

McNary opens the season on Thursday, Dec. 1 at home against Barlow. The Lady Celts first league game is Friday, Dec. 16 against Sprague. They play at South Salem on Tuesday, Jan. 17 and then host the Lady Saxons on Tuesday, Feb. 14.

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"I think they liked my answer," Viggiano said. "I came from a competitive program. When I was at McNary the goal was always to win and I grew up watching that pro-

gram. My club team that I played for was always really competitive and successful and then I went to coach at Crook County so finishing on top, that was always the goal. If you're not reaching for the top, then what are you really reaching for?"

Having coached three girls

from Culver on a club team, Viggiano sort of knew what she was getting into.

In 2010, her first season, the Lady Bulldogs jumped to third in its league and made the state tournament. Culver then finished fourth in the state in 2011.

"We had really strong freshmen come in, who definitely helped bring a new level of volleyball to our program and just building with the other strong players that we already had the year before," Viggiano said.

"I had two girls from those first two years who are currently playing college volleyball. Seeing those girls develop and pursue volleyball outside

of high school is definitely something great for the culture of your program."

Culver has a Wall of Champions in its gym with giant pictures of past wrestling teams and the 2007 state champion football team but there weren't any girls.

Viggiano put an end to that as the volleyball program won the state title in 2012.

"To win it with those girls was just something very special because they had never won a state title in any sport," Viggiano said. "I swear our entire town was there watching

it and that made it extra special as well and for me to help facilitate a group of females going up on that wall, they're the only group up there, that was really special for me. In a wall of boys, there's a group of volleyball players, which is awesome."

Culver had back-to-back third place finishes in 2013 and 2014 and were state runner-up in 2015.

The Lady Bulldogs went into the 2016 state tournament as the No. 1 seed but finished fifth.

Along with all the winning, Viggiano has also created a family atmosphere at Culver, where she also serves as the school's counselor, and not just because her husband is an assistant coach and her mom has coached the junior varsity.

"They are our kids and we want them to feel that sense of belonging and that sense of love and acceptance throughout the year, not just during our season, so creating that sense of family had been a huge motivator for us and also something that our girls love," Viggiano said. "They talk about that all the time and can't imagine not having these experiences as part of their high school career and that makes me feel good because that's the environment we wanted to create."

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