

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Drill here but not there? Heck, no

The ink had barely dried on our editorial this week expressing concerns about the Trump administration's green light to more private offshore drilling leases when an odd thing happened.

Ryan Zinke, the president's interior secretary, traveled to Florida to meet urgently with the governor, Rick Scott.

And at the end of an extremely cordial meeting, Zinke announced that there would be no oil and gas drilling off the Florida coastlines.

Apparently, the governor told him Florida's economy was "unique" and relies so much on tourism that state officials were worried that if anything went wrong with any drilling there was a danger of potential environmental contamination.

Does that sound familiar?

Oregon could make the exactly same argument.

So could Washington.

So could California and Alaska, two states which have coastlines longer than some entire countries.

And, let's not to leave out the East Coast.

It's far from a red versus blue state controversy. In fact, Republican governors in New Hampshire, South Carolina, Maryland, Massachusetts and Georgia are aghast at Florida's preferential treatment. And leaders in Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina and Connecticut have all opposed new drilling leases off their coasts, too.

Close to home, we worry about our economy, especially the vulnerable West Coast fisheries, which are vulnerable to potential environmental disasters. Commercial fishing supports more than \$500 million in personal income in Oregon.

In 2016, the Oregon tourism industry directly employed almost 110,000; visitors spent more than \$11 billion here.



AP Photo/Mark J. Terrill

An offshore oil platform off the coast of Santa Barbara, Calif.



AP Photo/Jae C. Hong

A worker removes oil from the sand at Refugio State Beach north of Goleta, Calif., a month after a May 19, 2015 oil spill north of Santa Barbara.

Tourists don't want to look out at giant man-made monstrosities while playing on our beaches.

The West Coast, quite rightly, jumped on the administration's Florida action

and cried "foul!"

Oregon's Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley joined leaders representing other coastal states to tell the Trump administration that they don't want off-

shore oil and gas drilling. They are demanding the same respect given to Florida, which was granted the exemption. Arguments are the same for all our coasts.

Since the Florida revelation, much has been discussed about Donald Trump's business empire in the Sunshine state, including his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach. If that was a factor in the decision, then it was unconscionable. And Florida's governor, Scott, is a Republican, whereas the three West Coast states have Democratic Party governors.

But even if you take those suspicions out of the equation, the Florida exception simply fails to meet the fair play sniff test. That state's concerns are legitimate — and exactly the same as ours.

It is perfectly reasonable that we demand equal treatment. The only bright spot in this controversy is that elements of the negative reaction are likely to cross party lines with equal passion.

GUEST COLUMN

Questions for the Port of Astoria

Transparency and public trust are gone from the Port of Astoria. At the last Port meeting, I asked a question about a \$1.7 million Key Bank loan for our stormwater project. I'd like to know more about the terms of the loan to build the stormwater system. It is my understanding the first year had no payments, the second year required interest payments only, and not until the third year is the Port of Astoria required to make principal and interest payments.

The administration convinced the Port Commission to approve the stormwater loan because the Port of Astoria would only pay half, and the impacted tenants would pay the other half. Port of Astoria Executive Director Jim Knight told the commission that he had no push back from the tenants on this loan payment issue.

Knight's excuse was, "we haven't done anything with the tenants because we wanted to make sure it works before we ask the tenants start paying their share." I guess that means if it doesn't work, the tenants don't have to make the payments, and the Port of Astoria/taxpayers have to pay for this cost.

Over the last 18 months, the commissioners have asked for "stormwater" to be an agenda item. I have been told by Commission President Frank Spence that it would be an agenda item, but it has never happened.

Questions asked by commissioners that have not been answered:

1. What is the actual total price of the stormwater project?
2. Do the tenants know the terms of the stormwater loan, and shouldn't they have been part of the loan discussion?
3. Which tenants are responsible for half

of the total loan cost, and have they been contacted?

4. Shouldn't the Oregon Department of Transportation be responsible for a big part of the loan, since the U.S. Highway 101 toxic residue runs downhill into the Port of Astoria?

5. How do we get new tenants to come to the Port of Astoria properties, and what would be their share of this infrastructure cost?

6. When the project was completed, the Port of Astoria staff stated the stormwater project was \$200,000 over budget, where The Daily Astorian reported it was \$750,000 over budget ("Stormwater project at Port behind schedule," March 29, 2017). Why wasn't the commission informed about the over-budget costs by the administration, instead of reading it in the paper?

7. What about the cost of the Department of Environmental Quality fines for non-compliance with the Port of Astoria's general National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System stormwater discharge permit(s)?

The actual questions are:

- Is the stormwater project working, and properly processing the water prior to entering the Columbia River?

- Were the DEQ-required tests of the outflow, which were supposed to be performed in 2017, ever done?

- What are the results of the stormwater tests?

Months ago I asked Port of Astoria Finance Director Will Isom, "Can the Port of Astoria not afford to make the payments?" His answer was, "Yes we can." His unspecific comment was interesting to me, knowing well we had upcoming litigation, \$100,000 in fines to DEQ, and \$660,000 in match money for our Connect Oregon grant that is long overdue, or on the books.

Bill Hunsinger serves on the Port of Astoria Commission.



WHERE TO WRITE

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