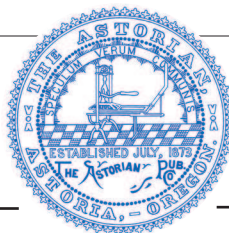


OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Time to regroup and rethink Shrimp War

The fight over using man-made chemicals to control burrowing shrimp in Willapa Bay has now been going on about three times longer than the Trojan War — close to three decades. Like that ancient conflict, the great Willapa pesticide controversy pits two diametrically opposed world views.

On one side are the bay's traditional shellfish growers. Essentially farmers who plant their crops of oysters and clams on Willapa's privately owned tidal mudflats, they practice a farmer's kind of conservation. Resistant to disruptions of established business practices, they have worked hard to keep commercial development away from the waterfront and contaminated runoff out of the water.

They played a key role in pushing for better septic treatment in Pacific County and led the charge against invasive spartina — which threatened to transform the bay into a vast expanse of worthless grass. They regard chemical sprays like that used to eradicate spartina and the one proposed to curb a burrowing shrimp population explosion as an unavoidable necessity, no different than a farmer spraying weeds or harmful pests.

On the other side are a growing number of Pacific Northwest residents who sincerely believe there is no safe level of artificial pesticide, especially in water. The Washington Toxics Coalition succeeded in obtaining a 2003 settlement to phase out use of the pesticide carbaryl by 2012. Used in the bay since the 1960s, carbaryl remains an option for controlling fleas on pets, but came to be regarded as too harsh in an aquatic setting. That set off a scramble for a different way to control shrimp, which smother oysters by churning up sediment while digging and maintaining burrows. To use a farming analogy, it is like planting tomatoes only to have them buried beneath countless gopher mounds.

Shrimp galore

There are literally billions of these native shrimp in the bay. Inedible by humans, they are far out of balance in the environment.

Some craft-scale oyster operations manage to get along without spray-

ing, as do some very large ones. Taylor Shellfish, by concentrating on the specialized half-shell market and by operating across a large geographical area, was able to walk away from spraying in the face of intense political pushback in 2016 to the proposed replacement for carbaryl. A chemical similar to nicotine, imidacloprid was tested and found to be considerably less impactful than carbaryl. It initially won state approval for use against shrimp. A Seattle newspaper columnist fired up opposition to it — fairly predictably, considering it has been implicated in honeybee die-offs. The bay isn't a hangout for bees, but anything that can be labeled a "neurotoxin" was certain to stir an urban backlash, even if those neurons belong to shrimp.

In many ways, the facts are the side of Willapa's mainstream shellfish growers. Environmentally, imidacloprid is a big improvement on carbaryl. It doesn't contaminate oysters or clams. Tideland treated with it recovers a healthy and nutritious biological film, a foundation of the bay's natural food chain that is wrecked when there are too many shrimp. The state ecology agency was all for imidacloprid, and then wilted like a sprayed dandelion in the face of urban politics.

Gut reactions

This is a case when the facts apparently don't matter. It's clear that the state's top elected leaders, starting with the governor, are unlikely to ever



Under a now-rejected plan, Willapa Bay shellfish growers would have experimented with controlling ghost shrimp with a nicotine-like pesticide.

go along with spraying. They believe such a decision would cost them support from a segment of the population to whom all pesticides are evil.

So, what's next? State Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz has cobbled together potentially helpful funding to increase experiments on other control mechanisms, such as mechanical harrowing of infested tidelands. Considering the softness of the surface, successful use of heavy equipment is hard to envisage. But every idea deserves to be explored.

As Taylor and others have shown, there are ways to rear oysters off the silty bottom. However, these methods typically involve greater labor costs and use of man-made materials —

often plastics — that come with their own practical, economic and regulatory drawbacks. Most Willapa oysters are sold to be prepared in recipes, not on the expensive half-shell. Any alternative growing method has to keep prices at a level acceptable to the class of consumers for whom oysters are an occasional meal option and not a splurge while standing at a bar.

A few pesticide opponents are sanctimonious know-it-alls, but others have the potential to offer constructive support to keep Willapa's farmers on their tideland. The industry must do a much better job of building alliances, finding new ways to survive until better answers are found.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vote Mitchell for House District 32

I had the great privilege of meeting Tiffany Mitchell at a good friend's house recently. This young woman is a lovely, conscientious, strong person, with beliefs like every caring humanitarian should have. She is passionate about health care, good paying jobs, affordable housing, and is a strong advocate for the environment, like every good earth citizen should also be.

How fortunate we are, indeed, that this wonderful individual turned up on our shores. If you're looking for an honest, caring, fact-finding state representative, Tiffany is your candidate. Make sure your vote is headed in the right direction, vote for Tiffany Mitchell.

JOYCE CARRELL
Warrenton

Vote Orr for state representative

I will be voting for John Orr for House District 32. John understands the importance of consideration for our environment, and he supports a balanced approach to the economic and environmental values of our forests. John's Tillamook opponent has worked for decades to harvest, harvest and harvest more, and demonstrates no understanding of the costs of short-term thinking and species extinction.

As an experienced lawyer, John will apply critical thinking to proposed legislation on a wide variety of matters, and act in the best interests of his constituents. If you care about the future of this place we call home, please support John Orr for state representative on the May primary ballot.

HELEN WESTBROOK
Astoria

Vote Mitchell for state representative

In electing Tiffany Mitchell as state representative of District 32, our community has a tremendous opportunity before us. Tiffany is the champion we need for all levels of education, and she knows how important the community college is to our local economy. She will fight for students of all ages and backgrounds who are pursuing a better future.

She's smart, hard-working, and passionate about serving our community. She knows

higher education is of particular importance to us, because it offers students a wide range of opportunities in preparing for the careers of the future.

In electing her to the Oregon State Legislature, our community ensures that Clatsop County concerns and priorities receive a strong voice in Salem. She will be our advocate, and fight tirelessly for our students and families. I urge my fellow community members to support her candidacy.

MELISSA OUSLEY
Warrenton

Call before you dig

Residents of the Pacific Northwest are eager for sunshine and yard and garden projects. Unfortunately, more outdoor work can also mean damage to underground utility lines.

April is National Safe Digging Month, and NW Natural reminds anyone who plans to dig to call 811 to have underground utilities located first.

Reaching utility notification centers in Oregon and Washington is simple and free. Two days before the start of a project call 811, register online or use NW Natural's new safety app to have underground lines marked. Read more at nwnatural.com or digsafelyoregon.com

Always report line damages — no matter how small — even a nick or gouge could affect a pipeline. If a natural gas line is accidentally hit and there's a smell of rotten eggs, or the sound of gas escaping, be sure to leave the area immediately and then call NW Natural's 24-hour emergency line at 800-882-3377.

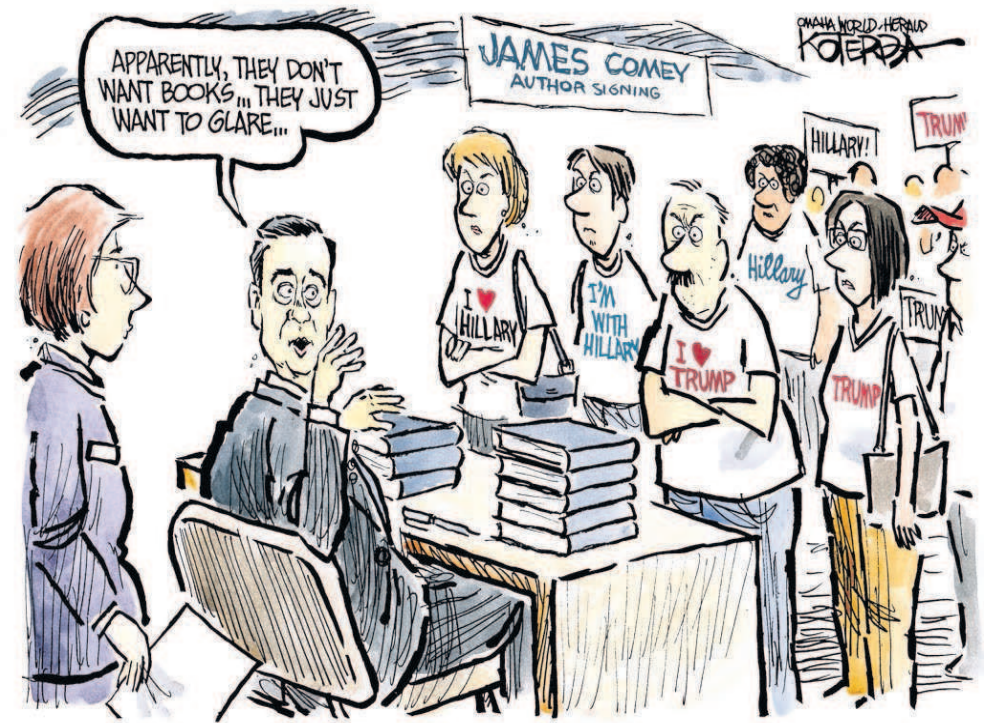
Enjoy the sunshine and spring flowers, and remember to call 811.

TERESA BROWNLIE
NW Natural
Astoria

PERS sucking communities dry

Consider myself pretty well-informed, but an article in The New York Times, "A \$76,000 Monthly Pension: Why States and Cities Are Short on Cash," was eye-opening. This article detailed how Oregon counties and cities are being sucked dry by obligatory contributions to the state's Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

If, for example, you have ever wondered why there is never any money to fix roads, treat the mentally ill, assist the homeless, or



staff our classrooms, the answer is now clear. The vampires in Salem are sucking the very life-blood from our communities.

Why do we pay more taxes for less services? Answer: so that public retirees can earn pensions of \$76,000 per month. I strongly urge this newspaper to get the rights to re-print that article and publish it for all to read.

BARRY PLOTKIN
Astoria

No more trash in the woods

Have you ever been driving through the woods and just think to yourself, "When did this place become a dump?" It's pretty pathetic to go dump your trash in the woods, and not take responsibility for the trash you have created. I understand if you are short on cash, and can't afford to take your garbage to the dump, but you can reduce the amount of garbage you produce by recycling the waste you create.

When you dump your trash in the woods, you are ruining opportunities for other people, whether that's hunting, fishing, or just simply going on a hike or camping. Sooner or later, gates to the logging roads will be closed because of people dumping their trash in the woods.

So before you go dumping your trash, just think of other people, and how your actions will affect others, and the wildlife. Take

responsibility, and go to the dump and dispose of your trash the right way, and the responsible way. There are plenty of ways to recycle, reduce, and reuse, and not spread trash throughout the woods. We should be trying to preserve the forest and the wildlife in it, and not be destroying it by spreading our garbage around, and polluting the forest and the creeks.

ANDREW BAIRD
Astoria

School lunch reform needed

For many students, school lunches are the only real meal they get throughout the day. I have been going to school for 13 years now, and have seen how much school lunches have changed.

They used to be handmade meals, by the wonderful cafeteria ladies, but soon enough everything had to be whole wheat, and healthy. But to me, homemade meals are more healthy than disgusting, frozen whole wheat chicken burgers, or burritos. Half the time we don't even have fresh fruit or vegetables to eat, we have canned, sugary fruits and frozen, old vegetables.

We need a new lunch reform that provides healthy and homemade meals to students, so we can go home happy and full of good food.

KAITLYN TRUAX
Astoria