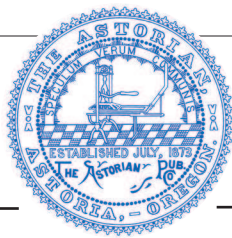


OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Sea lions expose conflicts in laws

Protected sea lions are eating protected fish

It must have been quite a sight. As U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader tells the story in his latest newsletter, he and representatives of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife were at Willamette Falls, where sea lions were decimating the salmon and steelhead, which are protected under the federal Endangered Species Act.

"We witnessed a sea lion taking a bite out of a salmon before members of the Grand Ronde tribe who were fishing at the falls could reel it back in," the congressman wrote. "The depredation was stunning to see."

The sea lions are amazing predators, totally outmatching the fisheries and wildlife managers, who had already tried to evict them from the falls. They had scooped up 10 of the offending critters and transported them to new stomping grounds along the Oregon Coast, where they wouldn't be eating protected fish.

Within a few days, though, the sea lions were back at Willamette Falls. The pinnipeds had swum up the coast to the Columbia River and upstream to the Willamette River all the way to the falls. It was a trek of a couple hundred miles.

The problem is that sea lions are also protected under federal law. The Marine Mammal Protection Act forbids anyone, including wildlife managers, from "taking" a sea lion, whale, dolphin, sea otter or polar bear without a permit.

The law, which Congress passed and President Richard Nixon signed in 1972, was aimed at preventing incidental take and harassment of the marine mammals.

In the Willamette Falls case, the salmon are protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Congress — and Nixon, before he was run out of office — approved that law to protect local populations of fish, plants and animals. Note that it doesn't protect species so much as local populations.

At Willamette Falls, wildlife managers have a legal standoff: Protected sea lions are eating protected fish.

All of which would be mildly interesting to farmers in the Willamette Valley, except for one thing. Though populations of hatchery-reared fish



AP Photo/Don Ryan
A California sea lion leaps out of a cage toward the beach and open Pacific Ocean as state Department of Fish and Wildlife scientist Bryan Wright holds the gate open March 14 in Newport.



AP Photo/Don Ryan
A California sea lion waits to be released into the Pacific Ocean in Newport on March 14.

are healthy, fisheries managers have been working overtime to rebuild the populations of native run fish in the river system. They outdid themselves recently with a plan to spend \$200 million to

'The sea lions are amazing predators, totally outmatching the fisheries and wildlife managers, who had already tried to evict them from the falls.'

\$300 million to build a concrete tower in Detroit Lake to regulate the water temperature for the fish.

While that tower is under construction, irrigation water to 8 percent of the valley's farmland would be either cut off or reduced for at least two years.

Here the managers want to take drastic, and expensive, measures on behalf of protected native run fish and protected sea lions are killing them.

What to do. ODFW last year applied to the National Marine Fisheries Service to kill the sea lions before they wipe out the salmon and steelhead. That agency, operating at the speed of government, is expected to make a decision by the end of this year.

In the meantime, Schrader, a Democrat, and Republican Reps. Jaime

Herrera Beutler and Dan Newhouse of Washington state and Rep. Don Young of Alaska have introduced legislation to update the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Called the Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Predation Prevention Act, the bill would extend to states and tribes the authority to kill sea lions that prey on endangered salmon and steelhead. Sea lions have also been making a banquet of protected fish in the Columbia River.

It's a good first step toward getting a handle on this problem. And it might also be a step toward revisiting the Nixon-era environmental laws that conflict with one another and cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars a year to protect local populations of fish, plants and wildlife.

If everything is protected, then nothing is protected.

WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

Politicians need daily dose of ego feed

Knowing when to leave the stage is an essential choice

It is hard to avoid the phenomenon of Rudolf Giuliani.

The man who was famously known as America's Mayor now appears night and day as President Trump's lawyer. Gaffes in Giuliani's statements have generated abundant commentary and fodder for late-night talk show hosts. Commenting on the gaps in Giuliani's knowledge, one analyst has said that he's not really the president's lawyer; he is a television version of a lawyer.

It is a strange choice for a man in his seventh decade to opt for self-debasement. In that, Giuliani is not alone. Fronting for a morally fraught president has brought out the worst in a number of men and women.

Why do it? There is the paycheck, of course. But there is the ego feed that only television provides. In a revealing statement to *The New York Times* on May 12, Giuliani said: "The last year, a half, I haven't been on television. Frankly, I missed it."

Knowing when to leave the stage is an essential choice for the public man or woman. Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah is giving evidence of having stayed too long. Sen. Hatch spoke about people who supported Obamacare, saying they were some "of the stupidest, dumbass people I've met." On the following day, Hatch



AP Photo/Andrew Harnik
Rudy Giuliani speaks in Washington, D.C.

walked that comment back and apologized. The Obamacare comment was a level of intemperance that was not typical of Hatch in the decade I observed him on Capitol Hill.

Watching Hatch in real time while he loses his instinct and self control reminded me that Oregon Sen. Mark Hatfield was wise in retiring from the Senate in his prime.

One phenomenon I observed as a congressional correspondent was the massive doses of ego feed that senators and congressmen received from television cameras. As Rudy Giuliani has inferred, the camera's gaze can become an addiction. In the 1990s it occurred to me that some of the lawmakers whom I

observed were like aging addicts who needed their daily fix of ego feed.

Television changed Congress

Retirement from daily journalism has allowed me to pursue a topic I've been researching, off and on, for 40 years. It is the life of Richard L. Neuberger — one of America's most prolific freelance writers and the first Democrat Oregon elected to the U.S. Senate in 40 years.

This research immerses me into a distinctly different Oregon political culture. And the U.S. Senate culture Neuberger inhabited in the 1950s was much different than today's.

When I watched the Senate in the 1990s, I had a prior reference point — 30 years prior, as a Senate page in 1963. The most profound difference was that senators no longer knew each other. They had lost social contact.

It occurred to me that two innovations had changed Congress. They were central air conditioning and the commercial jet. Central air conditioning ended the long congressional summer recess, in which western senators traveled home by train. And the commercial jet made today's absurd amount of senatorial travel possible. It also eliminated the weekend socializing that once was a fixture of congressional life.

Of course, a third innovation was the advent of television. In Dick Neuberger's 1954 upset victory, television was a relatively small factor. He ran a campaign that we would not recognize today — driving from town to town in an old Buick with his wife Maurine. I know that not from watching archival television footage, but from a newspaper reporter who tracked the Neuberger's progress around the state.

These days, technology allows the camera to be omnipresent. As we know, that can be a great opportunity or a trap. And for the politician-celebrity losing his edge, the camera's eye will catch the worst absurdities.

Addiction to television's ego feed is not as physically or financially destructive as substance abuse or a gambling problem. But it comes with a symptomatology. It enables foolish behavior on a huge stage. For aging politicians losing their wits, that can become dark and embarrassing territory.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of *The Daily Astorian*, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.



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