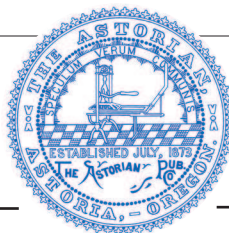


OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Wishful thinking hurts recycling efforts

When it comes to recycling, Oregonians have been fooling themselves for years.

We've been placing all sorts of items in curbside recycling bins, assuming that was appropriate because, well, it seems as if they should be recyclable — garden hoses, diapers, pots and pans, plastic bags, wire hangers, clamshell food containers ... even bowling balls.

However, such "wishful recycling" undermined the recycling process by gumming up the sorting machines and creating more work for crews, who had to get rid of the items. Meanwhile, some non-recyclables still made it through the recycling stream, ending up in bales of cardboard, paper or sorted plastics.

That contamination no longer is acceptable to the world's largest market for recycling paper and plastics: China.

As of this year, China is rejecting imports of sorted paper and post-consumer plastics that exceed 0.5 percent contamination. That's almost impossible for most countries to meet. Despite Oregonians' passion for recycling, their "wishful recycling" has resulted in a contamination rate that averages from 8 percent to 13 percent, according to the state Department of Environmental Quality.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

A recycling bin full of glass products sits among several for public use at the Astoria Transfer Station.

The DEQ said that with the Chinese market now closed, more than 10,000 tons of comingled materials have wound up in Oregon landfills this year.

That is less than 2 percent of all material collected for recycling. Still, Oregonians have to change their ways.

Some counties, particularly in Southern Oregon, have gone as far as temporarily stopping curbside recycling

and then relaunching it only for recyclable materials that have a solid market. Other jurisdictions are looking at raising collection fees because they must pay companies to accept certain recyclables.

Plastic is a prime concern because different plastics must be recycled differently — if there even is a market for them. For example, plastic bags are recyclable, but not in curbside bins because

they snarl the sorting machinery.

So what can we do?

- Pay attention to packaging and lifespan when making purchases. Strive to reuse whenever possible, instead of discarding.

- Carry our own containers for water, coffee and other beverages instead of using disposable cups.

- Learn which materials can be recycled at curbside. Instead of assuming something is recyclable, we need to be realistic.

- Remember that some items can be taken to recycling depots, just not put out for the comingled curbside recycling. These include plastic bags, shredded paper and certain metals.

- Make sure all recyclables, whether put on the curb or taken to a depot, are clean. For example, shredded paper taken to a recycling depot should not include shredded plastic credit cards. Neither should food scraps be put in with recycling.

Meanwhile, as individuals and as organizations, we must do all we can to encourage expansion of local, regional and U.S. markets for recycled materials. That is a long-term process but ultimately a better solution than relying on other countries.

LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Daily Astorian.

Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship.

All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar, and, on occasion, factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month.

Letters written in response to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than mentioning the writer by name, should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil and people should be referred to in a respectful manner. Letters in poor taste will not be printed.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Walmart traffic shouldn't be a surprise

Let me get this straight. After years of opposition and meetings, zoning issues, and who knows what hurdles, one of the world's largest retail chain box stores locates to Warrenton, and within months traffic-causing issues near the new Walmart come as a surprise ("Traffic causing issues near new Walmart in Warrenton," The Daily Astorian, July 18)?

Now representatives of the county, city, and state Department of Transportation, and law enforcement will meet to discuss issues and brainstorm solutions? Referring to there always being "minor problems, and once you increase the traffic, those minor problems become major problems" — thank you for your insight, Cameron Moore, county manager.

I am no rocket scientist but, are you kidding me? Was there no brainstorming on the obvious popular concern prior to now? He also states "these are typically good problems to have. When you experience some growth, you have to figure out how to deal with it." It should have and could have been figured out as part of the entire planning process, long

before the doors opened.

This isn't the first Walmart. These issues are not a surprise. They have been brought up over and over by community members. So we will have more meetings, more committees, and more taxpayers money spent. Let's not act like this is an unexpected problem, it is not. It's one of many problems to change our community in the near future, thanks to the Walmart store.

I, for one, will never know the issue first hand, as I will try my best to never shop at a Walmart store.

CLAUDIA RUSSELL
Astoria

Don't let Trump use immigrants to divide us

Recent articles and letters complain about the immigrants trying to "come to America," and how they're going about it. These people are all, as reported, from Guatemala, Honduras or El Salvador, if not Mexico. They therefore already are Americans, as much as you and I are.

In fact, their ancestors were Americans for centuries before President Donald Trump's

ancestors, or mine, or probably yours, ever got the notion to get on a ship and come here, too. Who checked their papers and "vetted" them when they arrived? If anybody, it had to be the ancestors of these very people.

Nations and borders are recent inventions, and only abstractions drawn on maps. Shame on us for letting Trump have the power to use them to divide us.

JOSEPH WEBB
Astoria

'Beauty and the Beast' is a gem

To everyone who doesn't realize it yet, we have a dynamic community theater company that performs a summer production every year, just across the river in a vintage building at Fort Columbia State Park. It's the Peninsula Association for Performing Artists (PAPA), and this summer's gem is the familiar and delightful "Beauty and the Beast."

I attended with my 9-year-old grandson recently, and was amazed at the local talent, from directing, to choreography, to acting and singing and costuming. It's an intimate setting in which the audience feels like part of the unfolding story. The songs are well known

to anyone with children in their lives over the last two decades.

Tickets can be purchased online, and I urge everyone to grab a seat for the limited performances left in this season. It's the essence of our regional community. And, explore the fort in the same outing for a memorable day.

GAIL GALEN
Warrenton

Astoria community gives to make itself better

Thanks, Astoria, for a great weekend! The Joy Train made its bubbly debut through downtown Astoria. Many volunteers made her possible. That fun melodrama "Shanghai'd in Astoria" sparkled. The new paint job at the Astor Street Opry Company Playhouse happened because of donated paint and painters. The Astoria High School Class of 1998 gathered, remembering the friendships.

I realized even more how our community of individuals, businesses and government just keeps on giving to make itself better. I'm so glad I live here.

SARA MEYER
Astoria