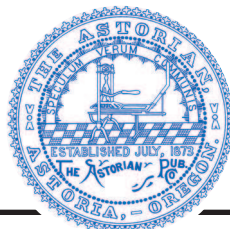


# OPINION



# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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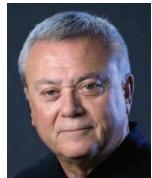
**CARL EARL**  
Systems Manager

## GUEST COLUMN

# Deepwater Horizon not worth remembering?

As if Deepwater Horizon never happened.

Never mind 11 dead oil-rig workers. Forget the 87 days that oil spewed unabated from a ruptured wellhead 5,000 feet below the surface. Forget the 22-mile plume of oil and chemical dispersants, drifting like a toxic cloud in the Gulf of Mexico, creating incalculable damage to marine life and coastal marshlands.



**FRED GRIMM**

Well, not incalculable. Virginia Tech economists assessed the value the public placed on the various forms of marine life wiped out by the 2010 disaster and came up with \$17.2 billion.

That's aside from billions lost to the fishing and tourism economies. Or the \$61 billion BP paid in fines, cleanup costs and reparations for business losses.

Never mind the health consequences, including chronic respiratory difficulties, suffered by cleanup workers and residents in the coastal areas where that strange red gook washed ashore. About 12 million pounds were removed from beaches and tidal marshes along the Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida coasts.

Yet, the Trump administration, as part of its anti-regulatory frenzy, has decided that the worst oil spill in the nation's history was not worth remembering. The Interior Department is discarding the offshore drilling rig safety regulations adopted after Deepwater Horizon to prevent another such blowout. Meanwhile, rather than wait for the cumbersome process it takes to undo federal regulations, Politico reported that Interior has jumped ahead and issued an extraordinary 1,679 exemptions to the safety rules.

Most of the exemptions allowed offshore drilling companies to bypass regulations that tighten the maintenance and



Tom Atkeson/Coast Guard

**Fire boat crews battle the blazing remnants of the offshore oil rig Deepwater Horizon.**

testing requirements for the so-called "blowout preventers" that automatically cap a wellhead in case of a rupture. Of course, the blowout preventer on Deepwater Horizon failed spectacularly.

It's as if the disastrous aftermath hardly matters as the Trump administration erases regulations that fossil-fuel operations find burdensome. Oil drillers want offshore drilling rules relaxed and Trump's appointees are there to serve.

Regulation rollbacks have become the very essence of the Trump administration, almost by default after stumbling with other big initiatives, like the construction of his fabled wall or the nuclear disarmament of North Korea. According to the New York Times, the administration has targeted 78 environmental rules created to protect drinking water, control toxic industrial emissions, limit greenhouse gases and protect endangered species.

Trump's fevered anti-environmentalists have attacked regulations governing the disposal of coal-ash waste. And the arsenic, lead, mercury, selenium, chromium and cadmium that steam power plants spew into the atmosphere. They've stopped enforcing the prohibition against using hydrofluorocarbons (a particularly potent greenhouse gas) in air conditioners and refrigerators. They've undone rules that required states to monitor tailpipe exhaust emissions and oil refinery pollution.

Much of the environmental degradation fomented by Trump anti-regulatory regime will be borne by Trump country. For example, coastal Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and the Florida Panhandle — the areas most at risk for another Deepwater Horizon — are home to some of Trump's most fervent supporters.

It's not the residents of liberal Bro-

ward County, Florida, or Boston or New York or Los Angeles who need to worry about an unregulated coal-ash pond next door or their children breathing polluted air from a nearby chemical plant or strip miners spoiling the water. It's not our workers who'll be descending into coal mines or boarding oil rigs where safety precautions are no longer a priority for federal inspectors.

Not that the regulation rollbacks aren't painful in South Florida, which was ground zero in the shameless for-profit college scandals that left thousands of would-be students with second-rate educations, deep in debt, facing dismal employment prospects. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has undone safeguards designed to protect students from the misleading and unscrupulous tactics employed by for-profits.

South Florida also has more than its share of endangered species, another genre that the Trump administration considers subsidiary to the wants of corporate America. And the Trump administration's pretense that global warming and rising seas are liberal myths will surely leave us treading water.

Of course, coastal communities in Trump-loving South Carolina, Louisiana, Texas and Alabama also face inundation. But folks in those places simply pretend otherwise. And they shrug off the Environmental Protection Agency's findings that cessation of the pollution rules for power plants would lead to 11,000 premature deaths, 4,700 heart attacks, 2,800 new cases of chronic bronchitis, and 130,000 asthma attacks every year.

And if Trump's supporters, between coughing fits, can pretend that Deepwater Horizon never happened, then why would they ever think to burden offshore drillers with inconvenient safety regulations?

*Fred Grimm is a columnist for the Sun Sentinel newspaper in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.*

## LETTERS

### A great season

Congrats to our Astoria High School girls basketball team. They had a great season.

I have been around basketball for more than 50 years as a player, coach and father, and I have to say I truly enjoyed watching our girls play this year. The best game I saw was when we beat Seaside on the buzzer.

Many of these girls are coming back next season. I can not wait to see them play again.

**MANNY SUAREZ**  
Astoria

### Solar panels

The March 1 story, "Astoria Co-op pursues rooftop solar array" (The Daily Astorian), states that this will be the first solar installation in our region. This is not correct.

My business, Center Diamond in Cannon Beach, added solar panels in October 2018. I believe we were the first commercial installation of solar panels on the North Coast.

I love what the co-op is doing, though.

**JULIE WALKER**  
Cannon Beach

### Gift of gratitude

I'm grateful for the donation, it's rare to hear about the good:

I'm new to the Chinook, Washington, area (October 2018). One day a person was telling me about a woman who passed away, but ultimately donated her money to Pacific County residents. The search for ways to fulfill the intent of Verna Oller's gift to expand access to swimming education for Pacific County started in 2015. Agreement with city of Astoria was reached in 2016. The program is very successful.

A couple of months ago I entered the Astoria Aquatic Center, showed my identification and utility bill, and have been using the center free and clear. The staff is very helpful, professional and friendly. I am hoping that anybody else who is using the Verna Oller Aquatic Trust is grateful like me. Without this trust I probably could not afford the membership; therefore, limit my opportunities for a more quality fitness program.

With this extreme gratitude, I want to thank the Verna Oller Aquatic Trust, and specifically Verna Oller's vision. So, with all the toxic issues we have going

on in our society, it is so refreshing to hear about, and take part in, a benefit the trust offers. Thank you for allowing me to take part in a quality fitness program. The greatest gift is the gift of giving, the second greatest gift is the gift of receiving. This has been a great gift for me, the gift I can give is this gift of gratitude.

**STEVEN MCCONNELL**  
Chinook, Washington

### Don't support gillnetting

As a Northwest fisherman for the last 30 years, I take exception to The Daily Astorian's support of Columbia River gillnetting. I have friends who are, or have been gillnetters, so believe me, I've heard their side.

The fish in the main channel are all Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed. I've seen the result of mesh size selectivity, and it isn't all that selective. The Columbia is the only river still allowing these nets, with good reason. As sportsmen, we're told that the Columbia River endorsement would go toward removing the nets, and now their use is being expanded for 2019.

It just doesn't add up. Neither does the newspaper's backing of commercial Columbia River netting. The money

brought into the local economy by sports fishing dwarfs that generated by commercial salmon fisheries. I'm very disappointed by The Daily Astorian's stance on this issue.

**VINCE ARCHIBALD**  
Vancouver, Washington

### We are but keepers

Oh, how I love Astoria. I love to go down to the Riverwalk, strolling along the banks to smell the estuary, to hear the waves as they lap the shores, to see the gulls, egrets and the cormorants.

I love to go to the river to count the ships in anchorage. I get excited every time I see a vessel coming upriver or downriver under the bridge. The sight of the river pilot boat pulling up next to a passing vessel gives me goose bumps.

I love that we celebrate being a Coast Guard City. I love to hear visitors go "oh, look at that," pointing to a spectacular view that has captured their attention. I love riding the trolley and listening to the conductors boast about our rich history, and pointing out all the river activity.

This natural wonder running its course along our city boundary was named Columbia in 1792 by Capt. Robert Gray,

but it has existed for eons of time with native peoples living along its banks.

The ancient Chinook people called it "wimahl," which translates to simply mean "big river." They revered it, and had great wisdom, understanding it to be a precious gift, and taking responsibility to preserve it for those who came after.

To paraphrase an oft-quoted thought: We do not inherit the beauty and the vistas of "the big river" Columbia from our ancestors; we are but keepers, and we borrow it from our children, and future generations, forever and ever.

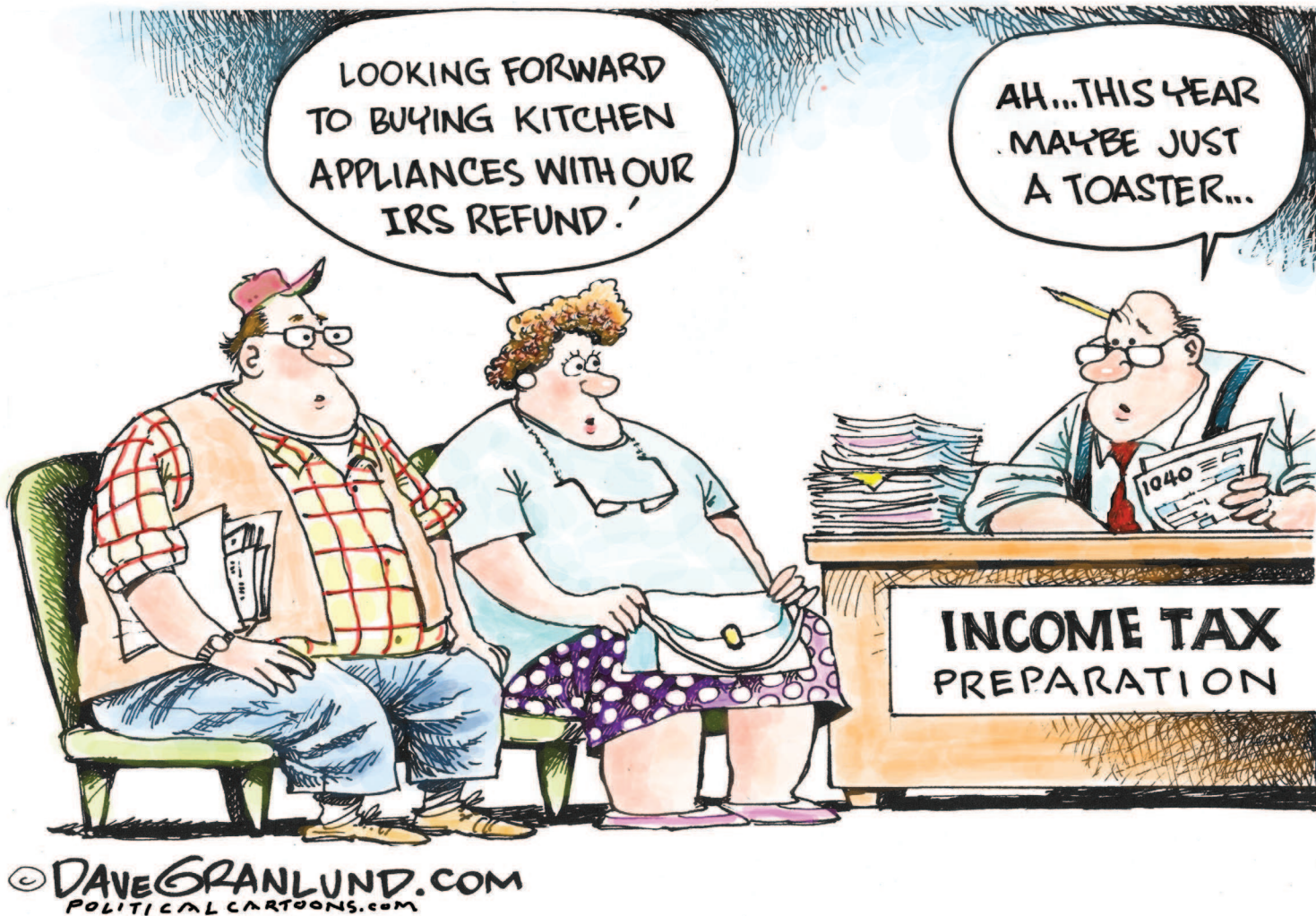
**LARRY ALLEN**  
Astoria

### Smart Meter concerns

About Pacific Power's installation of digital meters ("Clatsop County commissioners concerned about opt-out fees for smart meters," The Daily Astorian, Feb. 28):

It should be understood that no single, individual Wi-Fi device is the problem. It is the cumulative effect of all radio frequencies that creates the concerns for health and welfare. Penalizing those who share those concerns is unjust.

**DONNA LEE ROLLINS**  
Astoria



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