

OPINION

theAstorian

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GUEST COLUMN

#CelebrateAg this holiday season

Thanksgiving is all about making time to reflect on the many things in life for which we are grateful.

In conversations around the dinner table, Oregon Farm Bureau urges readers to remember the farm and ranch families who grew the food you'll be enjoying not only on Thanksgiving Day, but all year long.

While Oregon isn't a major producer of turkeys, we do specialize in beef cattle. Cattle and calves rank as Oregon's No. 3 top agricultural commodity by production value, drawing in over \$625 million a year.

Your holiday dining will almost certainly feature other prominent Oregon ag products. Oregon is No. 1 in the nation for producing hazelnuts and Dungeness crab; No. 2 for pears and onions; No. 3 for cranberries; and No. 4 for green peas and potatoes.

Milk is Oregon's No. 4 top ag commodity, valuing at \$552 million, and is used to create a host of delicious dairy products.

You'll #CelebrateAg when you raise a toast during the holidays. Oregon-grown hops are to thank for many of the region's craft beers, and our state ranks No. 3 in the United States for growing hops. The Oregon wine industry has surged over the past decade, now to 1,297 vineyards with 908 wineries. Wine grapes are the state's No. 7 top ag commodity, valuing at \$238 million.

Few things are more festive than purchasing a fresh Christmas tree. Did you know that Oregon is No. 1 in the nation for Christmas tree production? Because more people are staying at home this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, there is expected to be increased interest in purchasing a live, fragrant tree that can be enjoyed all season long.

Beyond seasonal favorites, there are many other reasons to #CelebrateAg.

For one, Oregon agriculture is sustainable. Through Oregon Farm



BTN of Oregon

Oregon is a top producer of Christmas trees.

Bureau's Century Farm & Ranch Program, an impressive 1,235 farms and ranches have remained operational, on the same land, and within the same family for at least 100 years, and 47 families have reached the 150-year milestone.

Agriculture is also family-based. Nearly 97% of Oregon's farms and ranches — including commercial-scale farms — are family-owned and operated. Some are "corporate farms" that incorporated for tax purposes or succession-plan reasons. In agriculture, "big"

doesn't mean "bad."

Agriculture benefits the environment. The wide, open spaces created by farms and ranches not only preserve Oregon's cherished landscapes, but also provide 70% of the state's wildlife habitat. About 551,000 acres of Oregon ag land are enrolled in the voluntary U.S. Department of Agriculture Conservation Reserve Program, which helps improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat on private land.

And, combined, U.S. agriculture, land use and forestry are a net sink for carbon emissions, removing 172 million metric tons of CO2-equivalent emissions from the atmosphere in 2017.

Whether for the simple pleasure of enjoying Oregon-grown food — or for agriculture's countless other contributions to society — please join us and take a moment to #CelebrateAg this holiday season.

Anne Marie Moss is communications director at the Oregon Farm Bureau.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Shop local

One of the most appealing things about Astoria is its vibrant and funky downtown. Clothing and novelty shops, restaurants, art galleries, performance venues, coffee shops — all add to our town's character and reasons for living here.

What would Astoria be without our downtown? So it's imperative we support our local shops all through the year, and especially during the holidays. Go out of your way to shop locally. If we lose our downtown, we'll lose a lot.

ED JOYCE
Astoria

Reconsider

As a taxpayer living within the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, I am concerned with the proposed purchase of the Broadway Middle School property.

In November 2018, voters rejected a \$20 million bond to expand and update facilities. Now the SEPRD, without community approval, wishes to purchase a property that has already been purchased once by taxpayers. Why do taxpayers have to buy it a second time?

I am concerned that our taxes again will be raised in order to support this purchase and remodel, in a building that has been deemed too hazardous to operate as a school. As a senior citizen on a fixed income, I cannot absorb these increases in our property taxes. I would much prefer to see this property added to the tax rolls, increasing county funds, rather than consuming them.

I urge the SEPRD board to be transparent with the entire cost that would be incurred, and to reconsider this expansion.

KATHLEEN TEEPLE
Seaside

Who will manage the Elliott?

In 2019, the Oregon State University College of Forestry apologized for "accidentally" cutting down numerous old growth trees on land that they manage, including one notable Douglas fir that was over 400 years old. Anthony Davis, the interim dean of the college, said he had not realized that the trees were that old and scheduled for harvesting.

He acknowledged the "mistake," and enacted a moratorium on cutting trees over

160 years of age — ODF considers trees over 120 years to be old growth — while crafting a new harvest plan for the college. Davis stated that the "harvest supports critical College of Forestry operations." They made a cool million dollars on their "mistake."

Now the Oregon Land Board is deciding whether OSU should manage the Elliott Forest as a public research laboratory, that would include some harvest-

ing. The Elliott, containing numerous old growth trees, was the first state forest in Oregon and is considered the gem of the Oregon Coast.

The level of incompetence and dishonesty apparent in the old growth fiasco above should disqualify OSU from having any access to the Elliott. What will stop OSU from finding excuses to harvest old growth in the Elliott?

With the current fiscal shortfalls

impacting higher education, no doubt the College of Forestry will be looking for any and all opportunities. If they remain in consideration, a thorough study of their new harvest plan should be undertaken before they have any access.

Public comment is open until Sunday at bit.ly/ElliottForest

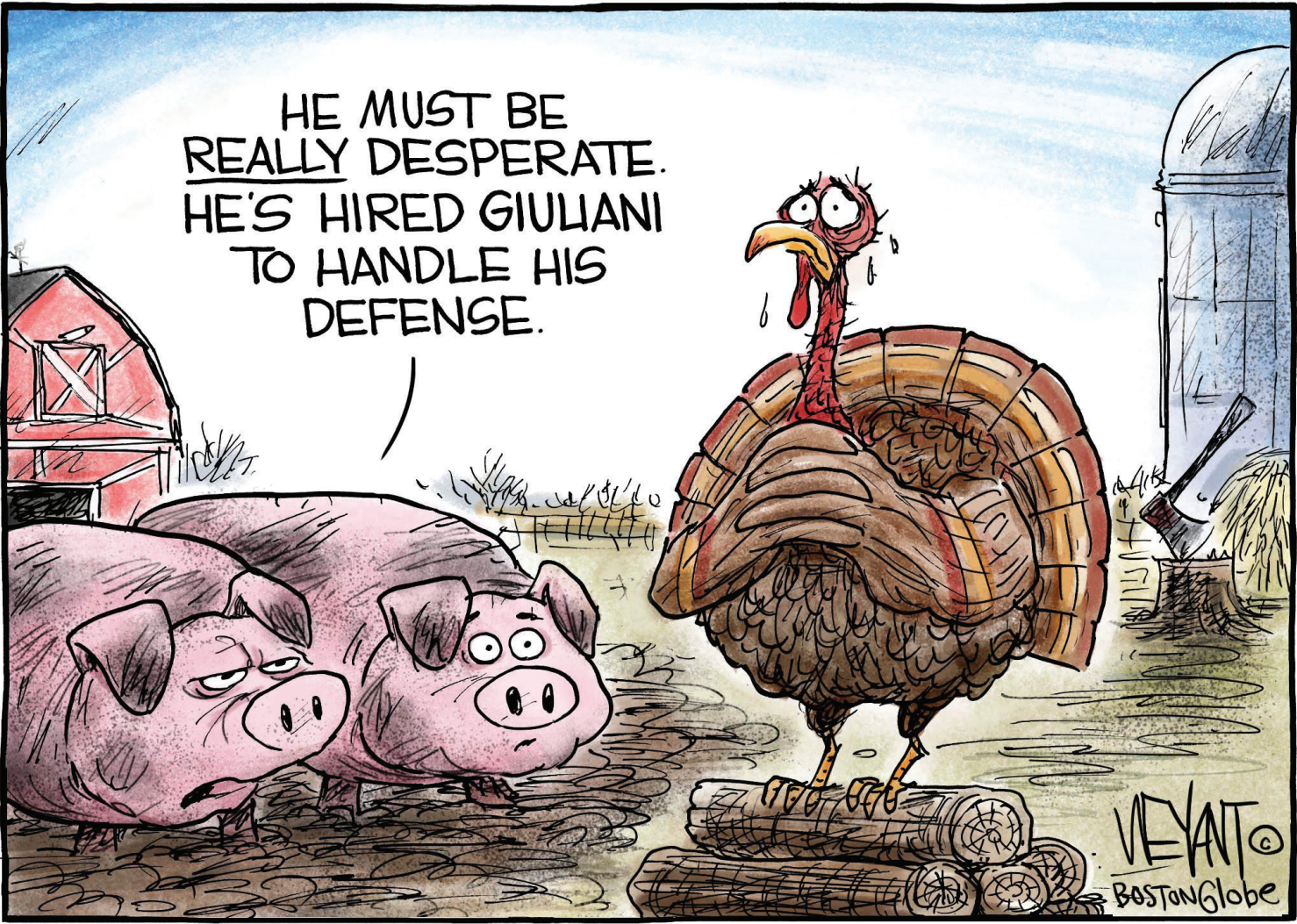
ROGER DORBAND
Astoria

Obstinate

Until Monday, the administrator of the General Services Administration, Emily Murphy, refused to declare Joe Biden the winner of the 2020 presidential election.

As a result of this obstinate inaction, the incoming Biden administration was denied access to vital transition information. This obstruction by Murphy was not only stupid, but contrary to her oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution.

RON HEUSER
Ocean Park, Washington



LETTERS WELCOME

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