

# OPINION



# the Astorian

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## GUEST COLUMN

# Washington state needs inclusive forest policy

**W**ashington's Board of Natural Resources is considering banning timber harvesting on state lands. That is extremely unwise. Instead, the board must ensure its healthy forest policies incorporate all management tools including planting, thinning and logging.

The board, established in 1957, sets policies to manage Washington's 5.6 million acres granted by Congress in 1889. More than 3 million acres were designated as trust lands to support various public institutions, of which 2.1 million acres are forests.



**DON C. BRUNELL**

Banning timber harvesting robs critical funds from K-12 public schools, timber dependent communities, the universities of Washington and Washington State, the state capitol building and public agencies such as law enforcement and social services.

Rather than generating much-needed timber sales revenue, fighting wildfires costs the state millions and drains the state's emergency reserves. These wildfires are fueled by the buildup of dead, downed and diseased trees and ground debris in unhealthy forests.

Healthy forests are important in capturing carbon dioxide.

"Our forests are our friends in terms of limiting atmospheric carbon dioxide," says Matthew Ayres, a professor of biological science at Dartmouth College. His research shows that forests can provide sustainable products such as lumber, pulp and fuel while still serving as reservoirs for lots of carbon — depending on how forests are managed. His research was based on timber harvests in Northeastern states.

Hotter, drier summers and longer fire



National Interagency Fire Center

**A columnist urges Washington state to pursue a gamut of forest management techniques, including harvest, as a way of mitigating wildfire danger.**

seasons — combined with unhealthy forests — have led to increases in fire starts and areas burned, according to the state's Department of Natural Resources. Fires in 2014 and 2015 burned nearly 1.5 million acres of public and private forestlands and cost more than \$500 million to suppress.

At the federal level, costs of fighting fires jumped from 16% of the U.S. Forest Service budget in 1995 to 55% last year. Federal wildfire suppression expenses were \$2.35 billion in 2021.

Forest fires are part of nature, but

they are getting more dangerous and expensive to fight. As fires increase in size and intensity, suppression, environmental restoration and mitigation costs soar. However, special funding requests for natural disasters will become more difficult to obtain as our federal debt soars above \$30 trillion.

So, it is time to revisit the way we are overseeing our forests.

John Bailey, a professor of forest management at Oregon State University, calculates "megafires" — those consuming at least 156 square miles —

are increasing. He believes "part of the solution is thinning forests through logging, prescribed burns and allowing naturally occurring fires to be managed instead of extinguished."

Cutting diseased, dead and fire-damaged trees is not new. In intermountain forests, loggers once salvaged beetle-killed trees and sent them to rural sawmills to be cut into two-by-fours. That practice was severely curtailed 30 years ago.

Knowing that mature trees are most susceptible to insects and disease, public forest managers once designed timber sales on small tracts as fire breaks. The logging and subsequent cleanup removed forest fuels which, in recent years, have been allowed to accumulate.

Harvesting helped fund replanting and fire access road construction. Environmental mitigation techniques have dramatically improved, resulting in clean water, healthier air quality and unencumbered access for fish returning to spawning grounds.

As we look forward to more austere times, we must revise management practices in state and federal forests. We can no longer allow nature to just take its course. There needs to be a more balanced approach which reduces the risk of wildfire.

Megafires are polluting our air, endangering our health and safety and burning a bigger hole in our pocket-books. By thinning, salvaging and logging, we could not only save expenses, but create jobs and bring in needed revenue to government.

Don C. Brunell is a business analyst, writer and columnist. He retired as president of the Association of Washington Business, the state's oldest and largest business organization, and now lives in Vancouver, Washington.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Giant hole

**W**e have a giant hole downtown. Whatever should we do with it? Lots of ideas are floating around. We need to rethink this.

For 70 years, Astoria has tried to become a tourist destination. The giant condom on the Astoria Column didn't work, and you want to chase off the sea lions. Now we have a great chance to achieve that dream.

No longer do the trailers and motor homes have to drive right on by. We have a hole. If we put billboards on U.S. Highway 30 claiming it to be "world famous," we'll attract tourists.

We can plant bushes around it and charge tourists to look in it. We could call it The Astor Hole. Or the Not so Grand Canyon. We could put mannequin arms in it, and call it Astoria's Arm Pit.

Maybe some wild donkeys — we could call it the Astoria A\*\*hole. Or statues of former politicians (we could use the same name). Maybe we could put in some water and a statue of a half-naked mermaid. Plant some olive trees, and call it the Olive Pit.

Why not have some fun, and make it "world famous"? Let's face it, sooner or later someone is going to figure out how to make some money with this thing. The rest of us won't get a vote.

Money talks. Let's get ahead of this thing, and have some fun.

DAVE BERGQUIST  
Astoria

### Practice

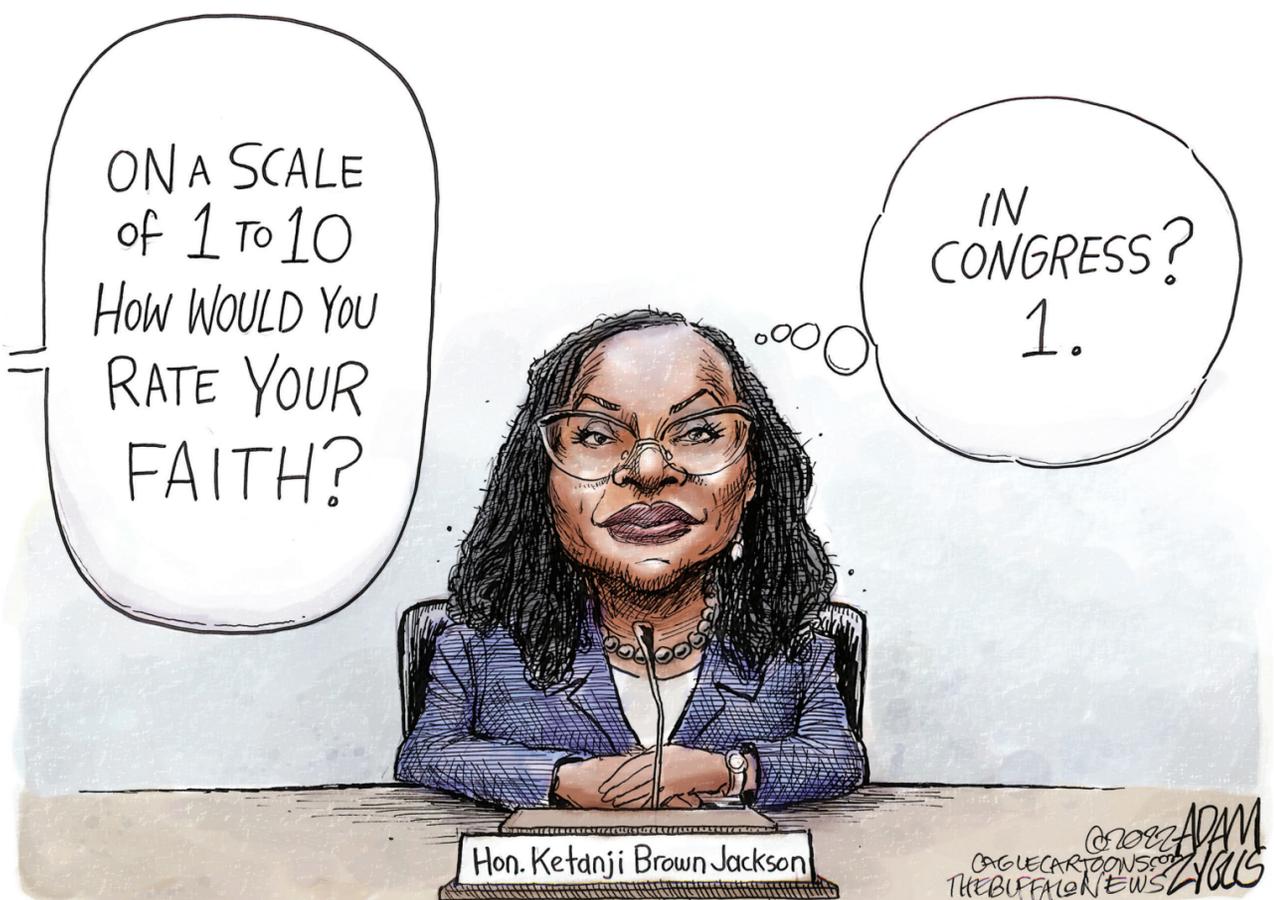
**P**eople should be able to download a free phone-based app that we could use to practice for the Cascadia Subduction Zone event.

The phone app could randomly send a notification that a Cascadia practice event just for you, or a group, or the whole region, was beginning. It would then use your phone's GPS to locate you and notify you of the hazards at your location, while providing a map of your immediate area.

You could see if you had to escape a tsunami inundation, where to move to, and how long that you had to get to higher ground. After the practice event, the app would tell you and Oregon emergency managers what virtually happened to you.

We need to practice and know what to do wherever we are at, whenever it happens. Without this type of real-life practice, I am not sure how anyone could be prepared. I do not see how emergency managers can reliably predict outcomes and prepare a response.

An app like this could be something that allows residents and visitors to become orientated to actual escape



## LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The 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 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 should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

tical projects that help communities thrive. INCO applauds Wyden, Merkley and Bonamici for doing their best to make our lives less difficult, especially in these uncertain times.

CHERYL CONWAY  
Indivisible North Coast Oregon  
Leadership Team  
Astoria

### Must comment

**I**'m a soon-to-be resident of the extraordinary city of Astoria and, although I don't yet live there, I feel I must comment on the Heritage Square project.

A central, downtown square, or plaza, is an asset beyond measure to a community and, once it's lost, cannot normally be restored.

While additional housing is an urgent need in Astoria, the Heritage Square location that's being considered is just not the wise choice, unless there's an equally central block where a plaza could be developed in the near future.

I appeal to the citizens of Astoria to protect this very valuable, and likely irreplaceable gathering place, and to recognize what a great and lasting effect its loss would have on the quality of life there.

JULIE KENNEDY  
Port Townsend, Washington

strategies. An app like this could engage large numbers of people in Cascadia preparedness.

This is a link to the rough design: bit.ly/3wjDF7A

ROGER LINDSLEY  
Astoria

### Salute to good governance

**O**nce again, we see how good governance makes a positive difference in our lives. Indivisible North Coast Oregon salutes U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici for her leadership in getting federal stimulus funds to our area.

The city of Astoria will receive more

than \$600,000 to upgrade drainage systems in landslide-prone sites. These include a site near Columbia Memorial Hospital and at First and Commercial streets. City officials identified key sites for this funding.

INCO thanks U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley for their work to secure \$1 million in federal funds for a waterline project in Warrenton. This money is part of funding for cities, programs and organizations in Oregon they obtained to support rural communities, protect public lands and build environment resilience, according to The Astorian.

Northwest Oregon is fortunate to have members of Congress who focus on prac-