

OPINION

Hood River News

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Our Readers Write

'Walk the walk' Library at 6 p.m. Hope to see you there.

John Hlavac
Hood River

Solidarity needed

Reading the editorial in the Jan. 8 Hood River News, I found myself drawn to the opening sentence, "I had learned that you should always shout louder than your aggressor." It seems that the author is using his pulpit as editor of a local newspaper to shout louder than most in our community. Secondly, Oregon senator Jeff Merkley is quoted in the article, "Trump and Pompeo

are either dangerously inept or colossally ignorant." Merkley also talks of the president's reckless and impulsive actions regarding Iran.

As the father of a current naval reconnaissance aircrewman who just recently returned from deployment, and second cousin and namesake to a recent Annapolis and Naval BUDs graduate, I would hope that the senator and newspaperman feel that the president and secretary of state are receiving mostly good intel from those in the field that are tasked with defending our freedoms. Although the authority and decision making of those in the highest offices of America needs to be questioned at all times by their constituents,

they and those tasked with intelligence gathering could use some solidarity at times regardless of political partisanship.

Jeff Mc Nerney
Hood River

Nothing to lose

Jan. 9 was a day of action called by large groups of activists from around the country who fear that Trump will start a war with Iran. Even in our small town, a group of about 30 souls braved the cold to participate in a rally organized by Indivisible Columbia Gorge. They came out to speak their

minds and raise awareness about the constant assault on our senses, now so commonplace in our society, that many of us just want to tune it out. I would imagine that even the most staunch Trump supporters in our community couldn't deny that subterfuge is the president's modus operandi when faced with a situation (such as impeachment) that he doesn't like. And what he did in the assassination of Qasem Soleimani made it clear that he will stop at nothing in order to change the subject. Many high level military experts have spoken out about this assassination, stating that although Soleimani was an unsavory character, he had been one for many years and no one

had done anything to remove him. One must ask why now and what were the imminent dangers to our country that apparently led to this unilateral decision. As usual, it was all about Trump. No clear reasons have been given to Congress or the American people. It is time for our legislators in both parties to come together and stop the insanity coming from the White House. We the People need real protection. We elected Congress and the Senate to be a check on executive power. The only imminent threat is Trump. We ask our Congressman Greg Walden to take a stand for us. He has nothing to lose now.

Sarah Bellinson
Hood River

ANOTHER VOICE

Americans need to broaden their perspectives and expectations on Columbia River treaty renegotiation

By GRAEME LEE ROWLANDS

Last May, the U.S. and Canada began negotiations to modernize the Columbia River Treaty (CRT) — a 1964 agreement that defines the way both countries share the Northwest's greatest waterway.

The CRT required British Columbia (B.C.) to build three dams in the upper portion of the watershed and use them to control river flows to increase hydropower generation at American dams and prevent downstream flooding, primarily in the greater Portland area. In return, the U.S. paid B.C. about \$534 million (at 2019 dollar value) for the first 60 years of flood control and agreed for the life of the treaty to return 50 percent of power enhancements to B.C.

This annual share of hydroelectricity, known as the "Canadian Entitlement," is a theoretical quantity calculated in advance by both countries as the maximum amount possible in a system optimized for power generation. In most years since the 1990s, this calculation has exceeded actual U.S. generation due to domestic factors influencing the operation of American dams, including integration with other power sources and legal obligations to provide river flows suitable for struggling fish populations.

Now that the CRT is up for revision, public utility districts (PUDs) and others are insisting that the U.S. negotiating team (led by the State Department) must secure deep cuts to the Canadian Entitlement — or terminate the agreement. It's fair to argue that payments to B.C. should be aligned more closely with actual benefits. However, those advocating steep reductions in the Entitlement seem to have exaggerated the imbalance and have neglected to consider the Treaty's full context. In doing so, they may be setting Americans up for failure, with a one-sided perspective and unrealistic expectations.

At the Dec. 16 "Treaty Town Hall" event hosted by the State Department, Douglas (Wash.) County PUD Manager Gary Ivory epitomized this misleading narrative when he told nego-

tiators, "We believe that anything less than a 90 percent reduction (of the entitlement) is going to be a failure on your part."

This statement implies that the Entitlement is 10 times larger than it should be. But estimates provided by the bi-national "Permanent Engineering Board" charged with executing the Treaty offer a different story. Since 2004, the Entitlement has on average been just 2.37 times greater than actual generation. This suggests a reduction of only about 58 percent to align it with actual power generation, not the

Changes to the CRT will be determined through a complex multi-issue negotiation, which inherently involves compromise.

90 percent that PUDs have argued for.

Furthermore, changes to the CRT will be determined through a complex multi-issue negotiation, which inherently involves compromise. Canadian water management does more than enhance power production and manage flood risk. It gives the U.S. flexibility to operate dams (especially Grand Coulee) for other purposes including irrigated agriculture in the Columbia Basin Project, ecosystem health, commercial navigation and recreation.

The Treaty required B.C. to flood four of its most ecologically and agriculturally rich valleys, forcibly evicting thousands of people and destroying rural communities. Furthermore, Canadian Basin residents are still forced to compromise domestic priorities to abide by Treaty operations.

The Canadian Entitlement is the only ongoing benefit British Columbia receives for this. As such, it is exceedingly unlikely that Canadian negotiators will agree to provide downstream services and concede to American

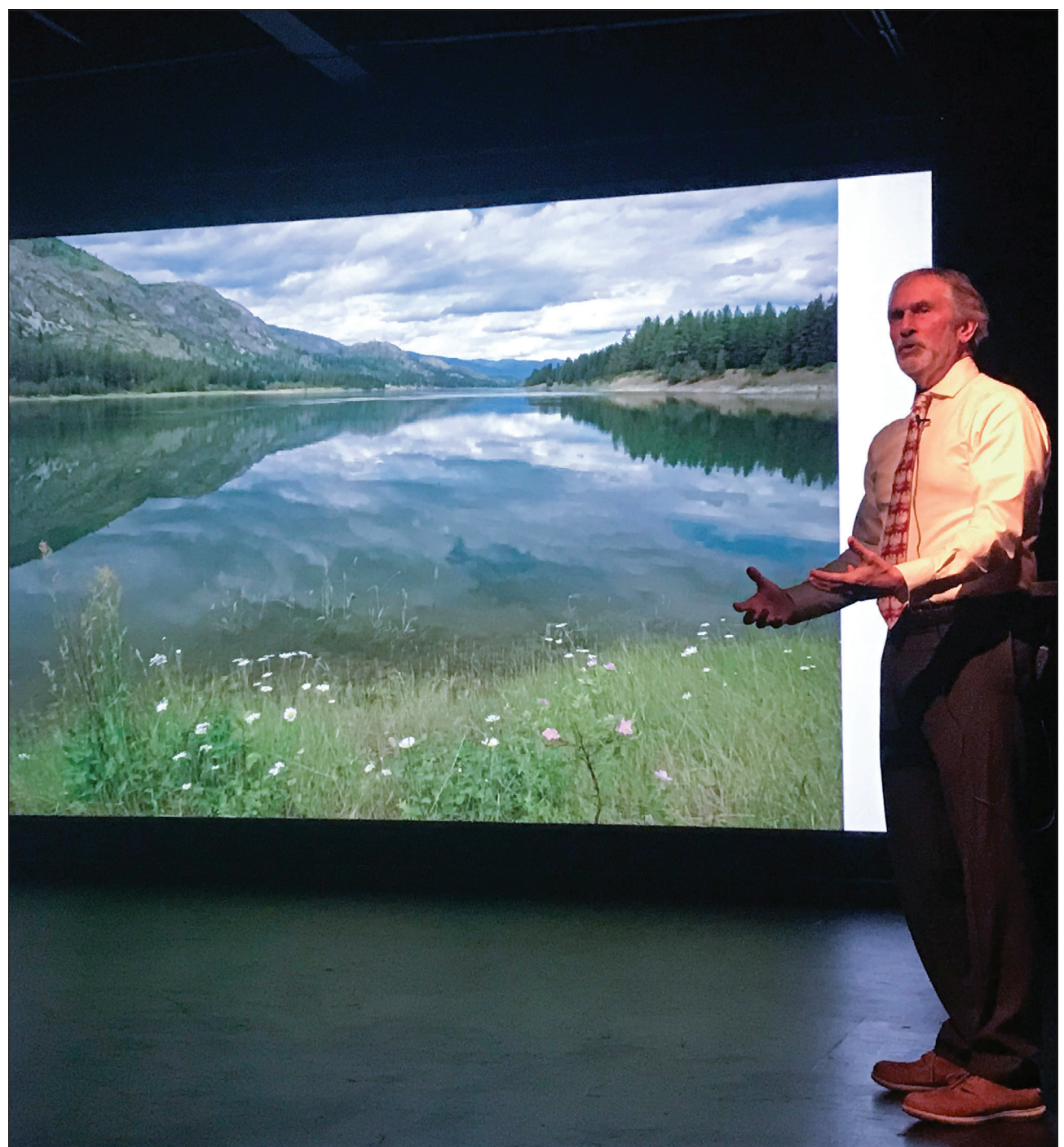


Photo by Peter Marbach

FOR ONE MAN'S multi-year perspective on the Columbia River and the international treaty, there is Hood River Peter Marbach's "Healing The Big River" book talk Jan. 22 at the Hood River Library starting at 6:30 p.m. Marbach traveled from source to sea to chronicle how it has been shaped by time and politics; in his book, Tribal members, activists and others write about how they view the past and future of the Columbia. Marbach, in November at Columbia Center for The Arts, displays a photo from a Canadian stretch of the river.

demands for a drastically reduced Canadian Entitlement. At the same time, the U.S. is not in a position to easily walk away from the Treaty, as PUDs have suggested it should do.

By taking such an extreme stance that is out of touch with transboundary realities, PUDs are setting an impossible bar for the U.S. negotiating team to reach. If the public believes the

negotiation is as simple as playing tough with Canada to get a better deal for electric ratepayers, they are going to be sorely disappointed when they don't get anything close to the near-elimination of payments that PUDs have told them to expect.

Historically, many Columbia Basin maps have cut the watershed off at the international boundary. This cartographic fragmentation

is reflective of an attitude that persists today, which believes that the watershed is best shared through a strict division of national interests. If we are going to find an agreement for the future that both countries can live with, we will need to reject this divisive philosophy.

Americans and Canadians need to understand and value all of the interests at hand, including those of

their neighbors across the border.

Graeme Lee Rowlands is a published researcher and contractor who has traveled the length of the Columbia River and worked in both the American and Canadian sides of the Basin. His written work on issues related to the Columbia River Treaty has appeared in more than 50 publications. He is on twitter at @gleerowlands.