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**OUR VIEW**

# Decisions we will make in 2015

A few major decisions will be made this year that will affect the area well into the future.

What are they? We're glad you asked!

Here are four that we are most interested in watching play out in 2015:

**Marijuana**

The drug becomes legal for recreational use in the state on July 1.

And while Oregon voters have already made that decision, local municipalities still have to decide how they will handle normalization of the long-forbidden drug.

Medical marijuana shops are currently banned in Umatilla County and most cities around these parts. So if people were banned from selling marijuana to patients with a legitimate medical need, you can bet there won't be a lot of arms open to businesses hoping to fuel recreational use. A majority of Umatilla County residents did vote against legalization.

But the county has created a marijuana committee — the only one like it in the state. And while it hasn't accomplished much at this point, the commissioners will rely on the recommendations that spring from it.

Cities may have their say on the matter, too. But before they do, courts will decide if those city decisions are legally binding.

**Local levies**

Eastern Oregon voters will have the opportunity to vote on the future of Blue Mountain Community College.

A levy to modernize buildings and build new structures surprisingly failed last year. But it has since been rebooted and rethought after a more thorough public process and will go before voters in May. Another defeat would muddy the way forward for BMCC, but public support of its modernization and improved technology could set it on a new path.

Voters in the city of Pendleton may also decide the fate of a separate modernization and infrastructure bond for the city. That decision never made it to voters last year because of a ballot snafu, though the city was ready to put it forward.

The crux of the levy would relocate and build a new fire station to serve downtown and the North Hill. City council has since commissioned a \$75,000 needs assessment to study the current building and what should be included in a new one, should voters give the OK.

It may be just the first levy in a line of them for Pendleton voters. Talk is already underway for ways to pay for city streets, and a levy has been proposed as a possible solution.

**Morrow Pacific project**

Major decisions were made on the Morrow Pacific project in 2014, but more are coming this year — but not any time soon.

Permits were denied by the Oregon Department of State Lands in 2014, dealing a major blow to the future of coal transfer station planned for the Columbia River near Boardman.

That decision has since been appealed and the herky-jerky movement through the courts continues. An appeals hearing is scheduled for Dec. 7-15.

While the final go-ahead or nail in the coffin may not come in 2015, a lot of progress to one conclusion or the other will be made.

**Water from the Columbia**

Every year we think this could be the year that the Umatilla Basin secures more water from the Columbia River, causing an explosion in irrigated agriculture production.

But we're going out on a limb to say 2015, in fact, finally, will be that year.

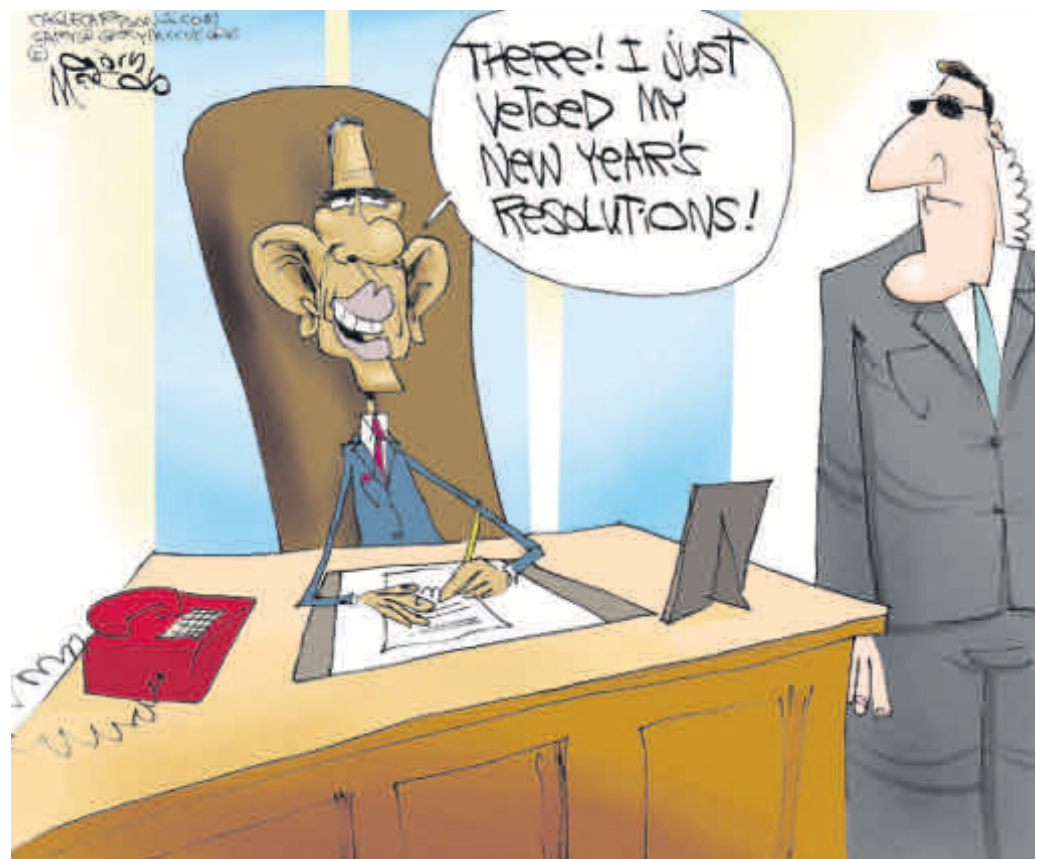
The dominoes are all aligned — from support in the governor's mansion to the state capital, from tribal governance centers to environmental and agricultural associations.

We think there will be no kicking the can the road, and a decision will be made in the upcoming legislative session.

If it is, we think the region, especially the north and west parts of Umatilla County, stand to benefit greatly. Farmers here just have to prove that fish and other wildlife won't be negatively affected. And that irrigators can get plenty of production out of a relatively small percentage of river water racing out to the sea.

A few decisions we make this year will have long-lasting effects for the region.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



**OTHER VIEWS**

## Hens, unbound

The most significant animal welfare law in recent history — California's Proposition 2 — took effect January 1. The measure, which passed by a landslide vote in 2008, requires egg and some meat producers to confine their animals in far more humane conditions than they did before. No longer will baby calves (veal) or gestational pigs be kept in crates so small they cannot turn around and, perhaps more significantly, egg-laying hens may not be held in "battery" cages that prevent them from spreading their wings.

The regulations don't affect only hens kept in California. In 2010, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law a bill that extended the protections of Proposition 2 to out-of-state birds: You cannot sell an egg in California from a hen kept in extreme confinement anywhere. For an industry that has been able to do pretty much what it wants, this is a big deal: It bans some of the most egregious practices.

Does limiting confinement for hens mean the end of cages? Maybe. It might become impractical for growers to build bigger cages; that is, it might be easier simply to keep hens in groups that meet the new minimum area required per bird and so keep the hens "cage free." That's not a panacea, but it is an improvement.

The new minimum is not specified in numbers, but the courts have said that it "establishes a clear test that any law enforcement officer can apply, and that test does not require the law enforcement officer to have the investigative acumen of Columbo to determine if an egg farmer is in violation." Hens must be able to spread their wings without touching a cage or another bird.

There is, however, another new state regulation — the so-called shell egg food safety regulation, aimed at reducing salmonella — enacted by the California Department of Food and Agriculture. This requires a minimum of 116 square inches per bird, compared with the current 67 square inches, which is less space than an 8-by-10 photo and just a tad more than a standard iPad.

Proposition 2 trumps this rule, and birds probably need more than 116 square inches to spread their wings. In fact, many experts think something closer to 200 square inches is more realistic. But some farmers may think they can get away with 116; law enforcement will determine whether they're right, and noncompliance is a criminal offense.

The new regulations will probably raise the price of eggs. Surprisingly, as producers in California switch production systems to comply with the new law, eggs raised by so-called conventional means sometimes cost



**MARK BITTMAN**  
Comment

more than cage-free eggs. This belies the arguments that the conversion process is difficult or prohibitively expensive; it just shows that many producers failed to take advantage of the five years between the extension of the new housing standards to all birds, and its taking effect, to adequately prepare. What have they been doing instead? Predictably, filing lawsuits fighting Proposition 2, all of which have failed.

That Proposition 2 is supported by a majority of people in the country's biggest agriculture state, and that its legitimacy has been supported by courts, shows the direction in which the raising of animals is headed. Gestation crates are on their way out, and battery cages will soon join them. With this measure, the table is set for similar action in states all over the country.

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"We've worked on passing anti-confinement laws in 10 states now," says Paul Shapiro, a senior director at the Humane Society of the United States. At least three other states are to take up similar legislation in 2015.

The most important part of the new law may be that every whole egg sold in California must adhere to the standards set by Proposition 2, regardless of where it's from. And since California can't raise all the eggs eaten by its citizens, millions of those eggs — perhaps as many as a third consumed in the state — will come from elsewhere. From Iowa, for example, where more than 14 billion eggs are produced each year. (Interesting: There are just over 3 million people in Iowa, and nearly 60 million laying hens.) There has been talk of shortages, but they would be short-lived.

So, in California, just as you had to meet higher emission standards than required by federal law if you wanted to sell cars, now you must meet higher welfare standards for hens if you want to sell eggs. Whether farmers comply, or disobey, or leave the business remains to be seen. But Proposition 2 means a new norm; eventually it will be, well, normal.

Just how high are the standards set by Proposition 2? "By itself, the law means that many millions of animals will no longer be held in cramped cages, and that's huge," says Shapiro. "But the message it sends to the factory farming industry is clear: Business as usual — that is, subjecting animals to torturous conditions for their entire lives — is no longer going to be acceptable."

Mark Bittman writes (mostly) about food for the Times Opinion pages, and is The Magazine's lead food columnist. He is the author of "VB6: Eat Vegan Before 6:00" and "How To Cook Everything."

**YOUR VIEWS**

### Police officers are needed, should be obeyed and honored

I arose early this morning thinking about the recent assault on the law enforcement in my country. This assault is being spread across this great country by radical, racist agitators in top governmental positions.

I feel, as one person, there is little I can do that will affect this great nation of mine and yours. But perhaps we can start locally to make an impact.

We are fortunate we have (in my opinion) local, county and state police officers who are dedicated to serve and protect me and you. As teachers, we can resolve to teach children to respect police officers and see them as friends who care about us. As Pendletonians we can resolve to show respect and obedience

to our law enforcement — when an officer gives a command, be obedient and honor that command. In all of the recent cases in the news where citizens were killed, disobedience and lack of respect for law enforcement was the cause of their deaths.

When a police officer stops me, I make every effort I can so he doesn't feel he has to approach my car with one hand on his weapon. Likewise, I challenge all Pendletonians to show their patriotism with an attitude of respect for our law enforcement. Let them see we appreciate and respect their efforts to protect and serve us.

Police officers: we need you. Thank you for putting your lives on the line to protect ours.

Al Olson  
Pendleton

**LETTERS POLICY**

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