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OUR VIEW

2015 climate a glimpse of what’s to come

Ready or not, here it comes: 2015 is shaping up to be a sneak peek at Pacific Northwest weather patterns expected to become completely normal as this century moves forward. This extraordinary winter of sunny days, warm temperatures and ample precipitation that fell more as rain than snow, is being described as quite similar to what we and our children can expect every year by 2050 or so.

Some local residents are likely to cheer this news. Few of us would object to having routine stretches of delightful winter sun and more manageable trips up and down Cabbage Hill.

An animation on astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson’s recent television series *Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey* showed many years of global temperature predictions in flickering succession. It was striking that the Pacific Northwest — basically the geographical zone sometimes called Cascadia — is predicted to be an oasis of moderate weather in a world that will be getting more and more uncomfortable.

Lucky us, right? Well, kind of. There was considerable regional news commentary last week about the lack of mountain snowpack and the growing potential for a summer and fall of drought and forest fires. Some of this will have direct impacts here. In particular, lack of snow in the Blue and Cascade mountains will impact farmers and wildlife not just this year, but for years to come. And forest and field fires will become more routine, as early as March and even more difficult to tamp down in midsummer.

Around here, snowpack is a necessary natural reservoir for a while in the spring, but our temperatures and lack of summer rain means that if we want to store water for use between July and September, we must continue to engineer and store it ourselves.

The cool and wet winters and the inversions that have long tortured local sun lovers are well on their way to becoming high-value assets. In coming decades, population growth could be the biggest impact the Northwest sees from discombobulations in the weather. Whether it’s extreme heat in the Southwest or extreme winter cold in the Northeast, our conditions are highly enviable in comparison. This reality increasingly is coming to the attention of outsiders.

We must continue to pay attention to water storage, development and outdated technology on our waterways, and protecting key resource lands for industry, residential use, habitat and recreation. We can endeavor to shape our communities’ destiny, or else allow circumstances to take their own course.

Our area’s citizens should clearly prefer to maintain control of our own life raft in these risky times.

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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

Chief Joseph, Abigail Dunaway the right Oregon representatives

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

The ponderously named Statuary Hall Study Commission was no doubt happy last week to hand state lawmakers the final job of deciding which two historic figures should represent Oregon in a collection on display at the U.S. Capitol.

The commission recommended that lawmakers select Nez Perce leader Chief Joseph and pioneering women’s rights activist Abigail Scott Duniway to replace pioneer Jason Lee, a 19th century missionary, and John McLoughlin, a fur trader known as the father of Oregon, as the state’s representatives in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C.

The decision to remove Lee and McLoughlin, whose statues have stood in the Capitol since 1953, was a relatively easy one. Few contemporary Oregonians can identify either, and their removal is unlikely to create more than a ripple of controversy.

Deciding who should replace them has been much harder.

In 2000, Congress passed legislation allowing states to reclaim and replace the original statues in the national collection. Supporters of Mark Hatfield, a former governor who represented Oregon in the U.S. Senate for 30 years, moved quickly to lobby for a statue of the late senator in the nation’s Capitol. In 2013, and again in 2014, the state House of Representatives approved legislation to bring the Lee statue back to Oregon and replace it with one of Hatfield.

After the bills died in the Senate, Gov. John Kitzhaber appointed a commission to study the issue. After recommending that the statues of both Lee and McLoughlin be returned to yet-to-be identified “places of honor” in Oregon, the panel tackled the thankless job of deciding who should represent Oregon.

The commission heard public testimony and worked with historians, and narrowed a lengthy list of candidates to four in December — Hatfield, Chief Joseph, Duniway and Tom McCall, a charismatic former two-term governor whose leadership on environmental issues helped produce the country’s first “bottle bill,” won passage of a law maintaining public ownership of the state’s beaches and created the first statewide land-use planning system.

All four were excellent nominations, although some were not happy about the omission of notables such as former Sen. Wayne Morse. And this newspaper suggested the commission consider livening up the Capitol with a less conventional choice — perhaps a statue of an Oregon writer such as Ken Kesey or an athlete such as Steve Prefontaine.

In the end, the panel decided to recommend Chief Joseph and Duniway. Strong arguments can be made for both. Chief Joseph, who lived from 1840 to 1904, was leader of a band of the Nez Perce tribe that courageously resisted removal by the U.S. government from their Wallowa Valley homeland during the 1877 Nez Perce War. Duniway, who lived from 1834 to 1915, was known as “the pioneer woman suffragist of the great Northwest.”

Chief Joseph and Duniway would make welcome additions to the National Statuary Hall, where women and Native Americans are in short supply and white males are more than well represented.

It’s likely that supporters of Hatfield and McCall won’t give up the fight. That’s understandable, given their impressive accomplishments. But lawmakers would be on sound footing if they follow the commission recommendations — that Chief Joseph and Duniway represent Oregon in Washington, D.C.



OTHER VIEWS

College for a new age

Kevin Carey has a 4-year-old girl. Carey, the director of the education policy program at the New America Foundation, has been thinking about the role of universities in American life for virtually his entire career. But after his daughter was born, that thinking took on a new urgency.

“All of a sudden there is a mental clock,” he told me the other day. “How am I going to pay for her college education? I wanted to write a book that asked, ‘What will college be like when my daughter is ready to go?’”

His answer is his new book, “The End of College,” which is both a stinging indictment of the university business model and a prediction about how technology is likely to change it. His vision is at once apocalyptic and idealistic. He calls it “The University of Everywhere.”

“The story of higher education’s future is a tale of ancient institutions in their last days of decadence, creating the seeds of a new world to come,” he writes. If he is right, higher education will be transformed into a different kind of learning experience that is cheaper, better, more personalized and more useful.

Universities in their current form have been with us for so long that it is difficult to imagine them operating any other way. But Carey begins “The End of College” by making a persuasive case that the university model has long been deeply flawed. It has three different missions: “practical training, research and liberal arts education.” Over time, the mission that came to matter most within the university culture was research. Great research institutions derived the most status. And professors who did significant research — publish or perish! — were the ones who reaped the rewards of the university system.

On the other hand, actual teaching, which is what the students — and their parents — are paying for, is scarcely valued at all. There is also the absurd importance of the football team. The hundreds of millions of dollars spent to create an ever newer, ever fancier campus. The outmoded idea that college should cater to students just out of high school, even though a significant portion of students are in different stages of life.

And, of course, there is the cost. Student debt now tops \$1 trillion, and Carey spoke to students who were going to graduate with more than \$100,000 of debt, a terrible burden at the beginning of one’s career. Schools like George Washington University and New York University became top-tier universities in no small part by aggressively raising their prices — which, in turn, became part of the reason they are now considered prestigious universities.

Although Carey has long been aware of the flaws of the university model, it is the out-of-control cost of college that he believes will cause people to search for a different way to educate students. Indeed, much of the rest of his book is devoted to the educators, scientists, entrepreneurs, and venture capitalists who are developing new ways to provide learning that make much more sense for many more students. “You don’t need libraries and research infrastructure and football teams and this insane race for status,” he says. “If you only have to pay for the things that you actually need, education doesn’t cost \$60,000 a year.”

Carey spends a good chunk of “The End of College” exploring the new world of online learning, for instance. To that end, he took an online course — problem sets and exams included — offered by Eric Lander, the MIT professor who was a principal leader of the Human Genome Project. It was, he concludes, a better experience than if he had sat in Lander’s classroom.

He expects that as more people take to online learning, the combination of massive amounts of data and advances in artificial intelligence will make it possible for courses to adapt to the way each student learns. He sees thousands of people around the world taking the same course and developing peer groups that become communities, like study groups at universities. “A larger and larger percentage of the education that has been historically confined to scarce, expensive colleges and universities will be liberated and made available to anyone, anywhere.” That’s what I mean when I say his vision is an idealistic one.

(Carey also believes that over time, new kinds of credentials will emerge that will be accepted by employers, making it less necessary to get a traditional college degree.)

When might all this take place? I asked him. He wasn’t ready to hazard a guess; colleges are protected by government regulation, accreditation boards, and cultural habit, among other things. But, he said, it was inevitable that we were going to see an increased educational experience at a far lower cost.

Maybe he’ll even be able to stop saving for his daughter’s college education. Maybe the rest of us will, too.

Joe Nocera is an Op-Ed columnist. Before joining *The Opinion Pages* in April 2011, he wrote the *Talking Business* column for *The New York Times* each Saturday and was a staff writer for *The New York Times Magazine*.

YOUR VIEWS

Pendleton stagnation due to lack of living wage jobs

There were two key points in Thursday’s *EO* editorial, “The cost of Pendleton’s stagnation.”

First: “Pendleton already has the highest utility fees of similar-sized cities from The Dalles to Ontario.” Second: “The city has left its residents with no choice. The roads must be fixed and the water and sewer system must be upgraded right now.”

Unfortunately, the major issue of a stagnant economy is the lack of jobs that pay a living wage. The 2010 census revealed that Hermiston has the largest population and the most successful economic development in Umatilla County. Young families with school age children left Pendleton to find jobs elsewhere.

The census data also revealed that one-third of Pendleton’s population is 45 years old or older. Many people here are retired and live on fixed incomes. The rising cost of utilities and property taxes will force people to leave.

People should be asking themselves why our town has stagnated. Here are some relevant questions: Why did Pendleton allow Wal-Mart to locate here? Wal-Mart’s business plan is to locate in rural areas, destroy the local competition with cutthroat pricing and then hire unskilled labor at poverty level wages.

Why didn’t Lippert Components locate an RV furniture factory at the old Bi-Mart property instead of 206 miles east of here in Nampa, Idaho? Why has the \$500,000 purchase of the Pinkerton property in 2011 not generated any income? Why hasn’t the city council paid off the \$2 million airport debt that increases every year?

Why does the city council continuously misjudge costs of projects such as the Convention Center expansion, which ended up costing almost \$300,000 more than originally proposed? Why do we have this quote by city councilman Tom Young? “No disrespect here, but this seems to be (becoming) a pattern,” he said, referring to previous cost underestimates by city staff. Why didn’t our city manager turn in the paperwork for the bond issue before its deadline? Why does the city council continue to take out interagency loans to give to outside developers, to give to Peak 3 despite it turning into a money pit, and to give outside consultants like Mackenzie \$75,909 for a fire station feasibility study and then award them a contract to build the new firehouse?

What role do city regulations have on businesses that want to build and locate here?

For answers, read the new Pendleton Unified Code.

Jerry Cronin
Pendleton

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