

Quick takes

Raising the speed limit

Yes we are the only ones around that have a very slow speed limit which is ridiculous for Eastern Oregon, I see it as a way for the counties to make money on out-of-state drivers.

— Mickey Barber Meredith

Have any of you tried to pull a trailer in the in the right lane between Pendleton and Boardman? The ruts are terrible. Try it at 75 mph.

— Marshall Schilling

I'm the guy doing 58 in a 65 zone, better gas milage and longer engine life. Not in a hurry to die either.

— Henry Timzen

What good can come of a stupid bill like that? More death and more money spent on gas!

— Sharon Peck Brown

Don't people already do between 70-75 on Oregon freeways? I know I do.

— Eric Skaggs

Podcast recommendations

Josh and Chuck's Stuff You Should Know podcasts never disappoint.

— Elizabeth Connelly Scheeler

My podcast addiction has abated, but I still try to tune into the live feed of Kevin Pollak's Chat Show from time to time ... The 2-hour shows were great for read trips or weekend listening.

— Gary L. West

The Wallaholics podcast is pretty good and features Pendleton on occasion.

— Corey Neistadt

One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week's takes. Tweet yours @Tim_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.

Forest service still looking for a mission as nation debates forest's purpose

By JIM FURNISH
Writers on the Range

Perhaps Ken Burns had the right idea when he named his public-television series "The National Parks: America's Best Idea." Even though I worked for the Forest Service for 34 years, I'm inclined to agree with him about the importance of our nation's parks. But the national forests are surely our second-best idea, a priceless asset despite the call from some Westerners to sell off our forests and privatize them.

It is sad to admit that the battles over logging, grazing, mining and recreation fees have never stopped. Forests go up in smoke or fall prey to insect epidemics while critics complain about how ineffective and wayward the Forest Service has become. In some ways, it is the agency's own fault.

The Forest Service enjoyed broad support as a "can do" agency in the post-WWII logging era, but its glacial response to the environmental movement dried up a reservoir of legitimacy and trust and created huge problems, perhaps best exemplified by the spotted owl crisis in the Pacific Northwest. I recall vividly when a federal judge determined that agency officials had willfully broken endangered species laws in their determination to protect logging interests. As Orville Daniels, the former supervisor of the Lolo National Forest, put it, the Forest Service had gone over to the "dark side."

The agency has found it difficult to right

itself since then, and it still struggles to create a clear purpose and mission for the 21st century — one that resonates with the public it serves.

In my recently published memoir, "Toward a Natural Forest," I talk about how the Forest Service and I have both struggled to find a way forward. The issue confronting the agency isn't new; the question is still: "How do we get what we need from our forests without ruining them in the process?"

When I was the supervisor of the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon's Coast Range from 1992 to 1999, my work brought me into the heart of the conflicts over endangered species like the spotted owl and salmon. My approach was an abrupt turnaround that ended the old regime of clear-cutting, which ruled the Siuslaw from 1950 until 1990. I wanted the forest to be more than a tree farm, to find a way to restore what had become an artificial ecosystem. Critics denounced my approach as disastrous.

Yet today, the Siuslaw prospers, and its current management illustrates a land ethic that aims — as best I can put it — for naturalness. The old single-minded focus on timber production is gone, even though logging still occurs. The difference is that trees are cut sensibly and sustainably. The Siuslaw is managed to preserve and restore its magnificent coastal forests, productive salmon rivers, and vital wildlife habitat for imperiled species, as well as to provide timber. And as incredible as it might sound, there has been no timber sale appeal or lawsuit for over 20 years.

Throughout the nation there is still a conflict between the notion that national forests are little more than timber factories ... and the newer conviction that they need to thrive ecologically...

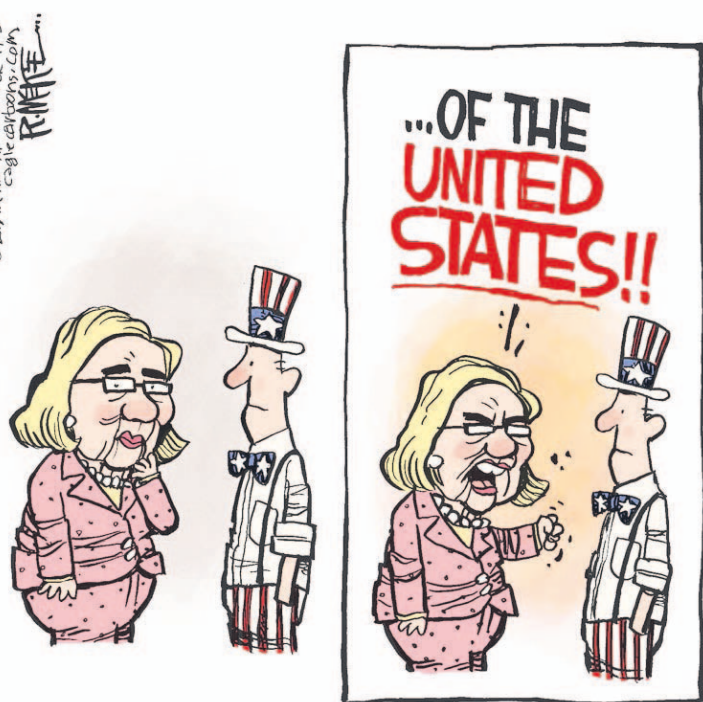
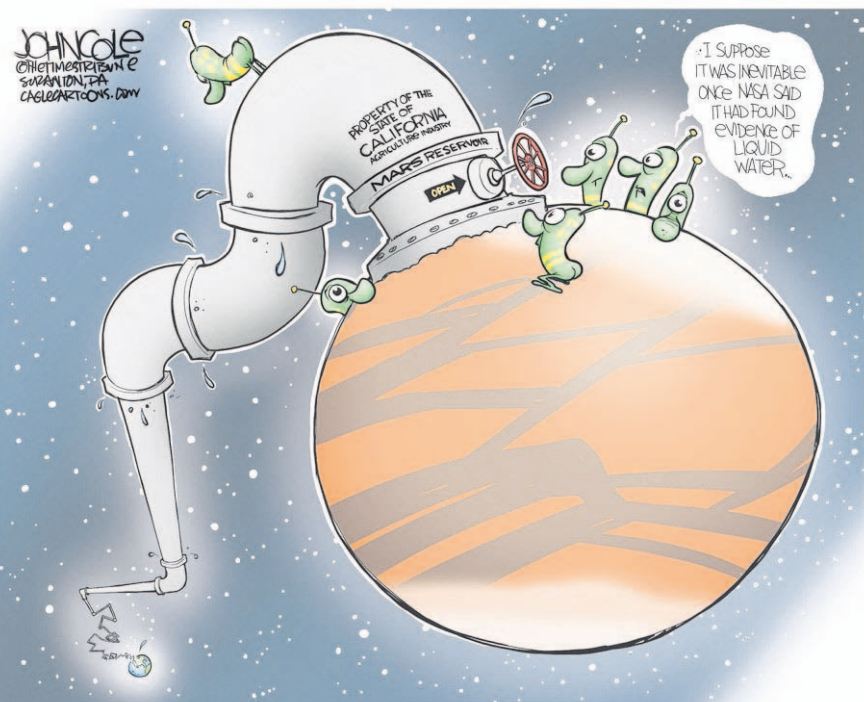
The Siuslaw's remarkable transition has been accomplished with citizen involvement at every step. I believe the people concerned have begun to rediscover the deeply satisfying sense that this national forest really does belong to them, with the Forest Service serving as a valued partner and steward for all Americans.

But throughout the nation there is still a conflict between the notion that national forests are little more than timber factories that need to earn their keep and the newer conviction that they need to thrive ecologically for their own sake as well as ours. The single-minded pursuit of economic goals has caused havoc across the nation. In the Northwest, it led to the disappearance of old-growth trees. In the Southeast, it spurred the virtual loss of entire ecosystems such as longleaf pine woodlands. In all cases, the emphasis on logging simplified landscapes, because the tree species were restricted to a few economically useful ones that were cut on short rotation.

If land managers favor ecological sustainability, however, the principle behind the existence of the national forests is kept intact, that principle being the preservation of a landscape's essential integrity and environmental function so that it can continue to supply forest resources in abundance. Logging does not need to be eliminated, but it does need to be coupled with humility and sensible business practices. On our public lands, there is no place anymore for greed.

We have argued for generations about what, exactly, national forests are for, and whether particular forests are best suited for logging, mining, drilling or recreation. But our highest commitment should be to the land itself, allowing it to be what it needs to be, naturally.

Jim Furnish is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a column service of High Country News. He lives in Maryland.



Fewer acronyms, more action

Federal Payment-In-Lieu-of-Taxes and Secure Rural Schools payment schemes are not in the best long-term interests of Oregon's citizens. I have attended countless budget meetings where hard-working folks strive to manage their limited resources. However, the hard truth is that relying on these monies will only place us on the same street corner next year, with the same cardboard sign, asking once again, "Please, Sir, More..."

All of these federal disbursement models are outdated, whimsically amended, and hobbled by bureaucratic ineptitude. They are built on a mishmash of legislative actions from self-interested parties that are forged deep within the marbled halls of our nation's distant capital. Worse yet, most federal actions are rank with either executive or legislative over-reach or pregnant with deplorable raids on the US Treasury.

- Executive Over-reach #1 – Between 1904 and 1906, President Roosevelt went tearing through Oregon maps creating 10 new forest reserves: 1904 – Baker City; 1905 – Chesnimnus, Maury Mountain, Wallowa and Wenaha; 1906 – Blue Mountains, Fremont, Goose Lake, Heppner and Siskiyou.

- Defensive Response – In 1907, Oregon's U.S. senator Charles W. Fulton introduced an amendment to eliminate the president's authority to establish national forests in Oregon. This amendment appropriately gave responsibility back to Congress and changed the name from forest reserves to national forests in order to make it clear that the forests were to be used, not preserved.

- Executive Over-reach #2 – In 1907, the night before signing Sen. Fulton's bill, Roosevelt grabbed another 16 million acres, deridingly known as the "Midnight Reserves." Opponents were furious, but five new national forests were proclaimed in Oregon: Blue Mountains National Forest (added to the older Maury Mountain Forest Reserve), Coquille National Forest, Innaha National Forest (created from the older Wallowa and Chesnimnus Forest Reserves), Tillamook National Forest, and Umpqua National Forest (Coast Range).

- Congressional Pandering – The next year, 1908, Congress invented the 25 percent annualized receipts sharing plan to placate states and counties whose land assets were completely nationalized through Roosevelt's takings.

- Whimsically bureaucratic — Since counties first impaled themselves in this economic death trap, Congress has never repealed federal misdoings but have only amended or modified the original acts with cheery names like, "Payment in Lieu of Taxes,"



DENNIS LINTHICUM
Comment

"Safety Net Payments" and "Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act."

This ought to remind everyone of the Obamacare debacle. It's cleverly named the "Affordable Care Act" but there's little that's affordable or caring about it. What was sold as a well-intentioned new idea has turned into a wasteful, ineffective nightmare. We should know better than to believe the cleverly named bad policies from Washington, D.C.

Look at the 1976 Federal Land Policy Management Act. This is where PILT was birthed. This is also where Congress declared a fundamental transformation of its Public Land goals. Up until this single event the federal government had a legislative mandate for disposing of public lands. After FLPMA the focus became one of land retention.

Land retention is the skunk in the woodpile. This is exactly why PILT and SRS exist. These monies are aimed at buying your complacency through the bankrupt budget and monetary policies of our federal government. Don't mistake their offer for a mere 25 percent of the revenue as the answer to your county's difficulties.

Instead of talking about PILT, SRS and O&C monies, it is time to start talking about the Transfer of Public Lands to states, counties and private enterprises. Dismantling federal land jurisdiction would give local communities control and management over their own natural resources.

It's time for us, as loggers, ranchers, entrepreneurs and elected officials to believe in our own future. Do not allow the Politburo in Washington D.C. to plan your life for you. Focusing on government handouts is never the right answer.

I know local families, businesses and communities are hurting. I know county services will face constraints but Congress needs to admit that it has promised more than it can deliver. The feds have over-spent your hard-earned money by throwing \$18.2 trillion down the proverbial rat-hole while your Commissioners are scrounging the pavement looking for Road Fund nickels and dimes.

Instead of being placated by the empty words of career politicians we should place our faith in local control and open markets as the best means of restoring and preserving our water, fish, game, timber, and mineral resources. This is the road we must be willing to travel to secure the blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

Dennis Linthicum is a Klamath County Commissioner and was a candidate for Congress in 2014.

AROUND THE STATE

On Hayes' emails

The 94,000 emails released between former first lady Cylvia Hayes and former Gov. John Kitzhaber's staff confirm what many news articles had suggested.

Hayes mingled her private consulting work and the work of the governor's office. The lines weren't blurred. They were thoroughly trampled.

Kitzhaber's insistence that the two roles were kept separate are not backed up by his own emails. He cleared the way for her.

Hayes has demonstrated that the public-private line was one she was willing and eager to cross. It would be no surprise to find that the same is true in her private email.

Her attorney has argued that public records laws should not apply to her. He said that releasing such emails would violate her privacy. And he said that disclosing the emails would violate her Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination by way of acknowledging they exist and that they relate to state business.

We would have more respect for those arguments if the 94,000 emails already released gave a different impression. They have added to the growing body of evidence that Hayes embodied neither the letter nor the spirit of ethical government. — (Bend) Bulletin

A common interpretation of John Kitzhaber's fall is that the former governor was hoodwinked, blinded or otherwise led astray by his fiancée, Cylvia Hayes. Many of the recently release emails reinforce that narrative, revealing an assertive woman who used her closeness to the governor for personal advantage. But Oregonians should not be too quick to let Kitzhaber off the hook. He could have, and should have, reined in Hayes, and now he's out of office because he didn't.

Few in the governor's office dared to challenge Hayes, even though some recognized that her actions created ethical problems. She treated staffers as though they were her employees, scolding them when she was excluded from lists of people receiving information or when scheduling problems arose. "It would have been nice to be informed of our moving forward on avoiding the food stamp cuts. I had emails that caught me unprepared because I did not know we had decided to move forward," she wrote in a message to a staffer in 2014.

Hayes' haughty tone and the sense of entitlement will bolster the narrative of Hayes as the villain in the Kitzhaber tragedy. — (Eugene) Register-Guard

Email exchanges between Hayes and key figures in the governor's office make it clear she intended to function as if she were a deputy governor, inserting herself into policy decisions, building her "brand" as first lady of Oregon and behaving in a supervisory manner toward senior staff members. The emails also reveal that Kitzhaber facilitated this, instructing staff to send her correspondence regarding policy matters and include her as a participant in high-level meetings.

So far, only Hayes' emails have been released. Kitzhaber's email records from his state account have not been. If Hayes' emails are any indication, Kitzhaber's are unlikely to make either of them look any better. — (Medford) Mail Tribune