

Quick takes

Umatilla river walk turns 30

Pendleton is so fortunate to have the Umatilla running through its heart. Thank you Amy Aldrich Bedford for holding to the passion of your dream to see the River Parkway become a reality.

— **Travel Pendleton**

I'd expect no less of E.B. Aldrich's daughter! Great story.

— **Brigit Farley**

This is a wonderful asset to Pendleton. Thank you Amy Bedford and her champions for the insight to something which can make our town something more special.

— **Janice Harper**

Gas tax fails in Pendleton

I believe the voters were penny wise and pound foolish, in this case.

— **Micah Engum**

With gas prices at what they are now, who would have even noticed 5 cents? Also, you do understand a good portion of the money that would have been generated, would have come from nonresidents?

— **J.J. Bell-Bronson**

We were given an opportunity to have a large percentage of the roads paid for by the thousands of people driving down the freeway, but since the people are so upset about the senseless spending by the city we will have to find a way for the people of Pendleton to pay for it 100 percent.

— **Harold Hess**

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.

Planning can reduce wildfire threat and cost

By **KATHERINE H. DANIELS**
Department of Land
Conservation and Development

The 2015 fire season was worse than any on record and summertime temperatures are steadily escalating. Increasing the average summer temperature by just one degree Fahrenheit results in an increase of 420 wildfires in the state annually, according to estimates by the Oregon Department of Forestry.

Research and news articles have focused on the need for forest fuels reduction, creating defensible space around rural dwellings, and improving firefighting methods. However, effective land use planning has perhaps the greatest potential for reducing wildfire threat.

The USDA Forest Service defines transition areas just outside communities as the "Wildland-Urban Interface." Since 1960, the population in these areas has jumped from 25 million to 140 million people. Today, about 60 percent of all new homes across the nation are being constructed in the Wildland-Urban Interface, despite one historic wildfire season after another. The result is skyrocketing firefighting costs that are ultimately borne by the public.

The Oregon Department of Forestry estimates that the average cost of \$319 to protect an additional home in an

already developed area jumps to a whopping \$31,545 to protect an additional home in a more rural area.

Dwellings in remote and rural areas put firefighters at added risk. Historically trained in basic wildland fire behavior and safety, using fireline construction and tools, firefighters today must have numerous specialized skills geared toward protecting homes — establishing fire perimeters, conducting burnouts around homes and dealing with the dangers of propane tanks, gas and electrical lines. When the focus has shifted from fighting fire to saving homes, forests are left to burn.

Oregon's statewide land use planning program discourages the kind of development that imperils firefighters and homes in this way. Implemented by communities statewide, it has significantly reduced the number of dwellings built in our Wildland-Urban Interface since the mid-1980s, when compared to other states.

While over the course of a decade Oregon lost almost



Flames pour from a structure fully engulfed in fire in a wildfire Aug. 21 in Tonasket, Wash. AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

Increasing the average summer temperature by just one degree results in an increase of 420 Oregon wildfires annually.

three times as much acreage to wildfire as did Washington, the number of dwellings destroyed was significantly greater in Washington, according to the Geographic

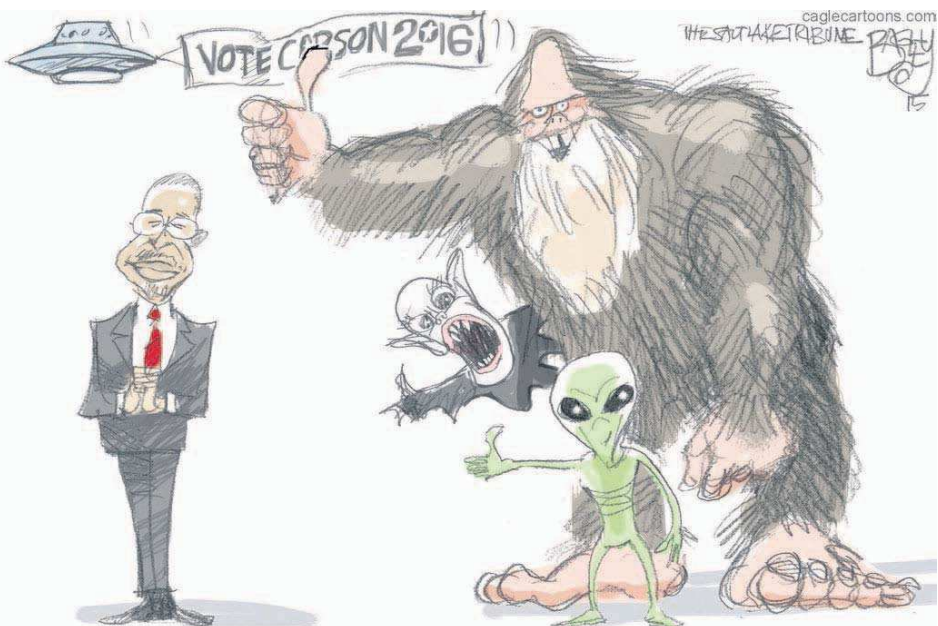
Area Coordination Centers and the National Interagency Fire Center. In the 2014 and 2015 seasons alone, seven times more dwellings were destroyed in Washington than in Oregon.

The presence of dwellings in wildland areas further increases the risk of wildfire. In the 2015

fire season four times as many acres burned in Washington as in Oregon where wildland dwellings resulted in fires with "human causes."

Over nine percent of Oregon's homes are currently at high or extreme risk for wildfire, according to 2015 data from Verisk Insurance Solutions. Current limits on dwellings and other development on forest land is paying off for Oregon by minimizing wildfire risk to new development, reducing firefighting costs, and protecting human lives.

Katherine H. Daniels is the farm and forest lands specialist for the Department of Land Conservation and Development. She can be reached at 503-373-0050



BEN CARSON LANDS ENDORSEMENTS FROM FIGURES IMPORTANT TO HIS BASE.



Protecting Owyhee Canyonlands would boost fishing, recreation economy

By **BOB REES**
Association of Northwest Steelheaders

The Owyhee River is an anglers' paradise. Around every bend, there are opportunities to wet a line and catch a brown trout so big that you'll start to believe all the fishing stories you've ever been told.

The roughly 14 miles of water below the dam that forms Lake Owyhee is a renowned blue-ribbon fishery, with brown trout, rainbow trout, crappie, and largemouth and smallmouth bass. Upstream, tributaries feature natives like redband trout.

Those fish are economic powerhouses. As the largest intact, unprotected expanse left in the lower 48, the Owyhee Canyonlands offer outstanding recreation, including hiking, fishing, rafting, camping and hunting. People come to the Owyhee from all over, and that's a boon for local businesses.

As such, more than 100 businesses have joined the growing coalition working for permanent protection of the Owyhee Canyonlands.

I joined numerous Oregonians who came together in Adrian recently to discuss the Owyhee Canyonlands Protection Proposal. The proposal supports ranchers and allows grazing of cattle to continue, while also protecting the Owyhee's outstanding recreation and conservation values.

I was glad that the Bureau of Land Management district manager attended on behalf of the agency and the Department of the Interior. The BLM listened intently to the public comment, and I appreciate their genuine consideration of all points presented. The common theme that I heard during the testimony is that the Owyhee is a special place that deserves to be cared for, for current and future generations.

The Owyhee Canyonlands include critical wildlife habitat for over 200 species, including California bighorn sheep, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, chukar and the greater sage-grouse. Hunting and fishing access in the Owyhee would be preserved under the proposal.

Activities like rafting, hiking and camping would also continue. Major legal roads and routes would remain open to safeguard these time-tested traditions. Wildlife management can continue unimpeded. Grazing would be grandfathered in. Mining, oil and gas interests are all outside of the canyonlands and not affected.

As a professional fishing guide and sixth-generation Oregonian whose grandfather fed his family on trout, the redband trout habitat is of particular interest to me. These are warm-water adapted desert redbands, an important genetic strain whose habitat is worth protecting. They are one of a number of unique wildlife

populations in the Owyhee Canyonlands that draw anglers and their wallets to the region.

The Owyhee Canyonlands Protection Proposal is a win-win-win for wildlife, people, and businesses in Malheur County.

The research backs it up, too. According to Headwaters Economics, Malheur County has 4.6 million acres of public lands, almost four-fifths of its land base.

Nearly two million of these acres possess unique natural and recreational values that are not formally protected. Economists compared Malheur County with similar counties around the West that had more formal protections for their public lands, and the data show that the other counties with permanent federal land protections on average grow faster, sustain agricultural employment better, have less economic hardship, and benefit from greater travel and tourism business activity. So, in other counties, wildlands protections have helped not only the tourism sector of the economy; they even boost the agricultural sector.

Protecting lands for wildlife and recreation helps the long-term economy and quality of life of local communities.

But what's also so valuable about the Owyhee proposal, is that current uses of the land will be able to continue. Anglers and ranchers and hunters can all be out there together, enjoying Oregon's bounty.

Bob Rees is executive director of the Association of Northwest Steelheaders.

Obama should not name Owyhee a national monument

We've seen this movie before. A lame duck president uses the Antiquities Act to declare huge swaths of public lands off limits so he can have an environmental legacy. Right up until the night before he declared the Grand Staircase-Escalante a national monument, the Clinton White House told the Utah congressional delegation no such plans were in the works. And in his final month in office, President Clinton declared seven national monuments.

I fear the Obama administration — urged on by outside interests groups and wealthy corporations seeking a marketing niche — is up to the same "dark-of-night" declaration on the Owyhee River canyon in Eastern Oregon.

Last Thursday night, in Adrian (population 177), more than 500 people turned out to a public meeting organized by state Rep. Cliff Bentz to voice their deep concerns about this possibility. Extra chairs had to be brought in to the local gymnasium, and people were still standing in the aisles.

One person who wasn't there? Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell. Although I called on her or a senior representative to attend the meeting, no senior members of the administration attended.

If they had, they would have heard a message loud and clear: Residents of Eastern Oregon don't want another "Washington, D.C. knows best" federal designation that would further destroy our way of life.

Yet, despite this public outcry, I believe the administration is playing hide the ball from the



GREG WALDEN
Comment

The Obama administration needs to come clean about what is planned for these millions of acres of land in Eastern Oregon.

Those of us familiar with Eastern Oregon know that the Owyhee River canyon in Malheur County is home to some of the most beautiful landscapes in the country. We also know that these lands are an important part of the economic base for Malheur County, which generates more than \$370 million annually in agriculture business according to Oregon State University, of which \$134 million comes from cattle.

The Bureau of Land Management and other federal agencies manage 4.5 million acres, or 73 percent of the land in the county, making public lands grazing an integral part of most local family ranch operations, many of whom have cared for this high desert country since the 1860s. For generations, these local families have been good stewards of the lands. They've worked cooperatively and collaboratively with federal agencies to manage these lands with an eye towards the long-term viability of the range and their family's livelihood.

Much like thinning an overstocked forest, grazing helps reduce the amount of fuel available to large rangeland fires that threaten watersheds and sage grouse habitat in the arid climates of southeastern Oregon.

When fires do start, the volunteers in the Rural Fire Protection Association are positioned to respond promptly and are highly effective, thanks to their intimate knowledge of local terrain and weather. Over the years, these

ranchers have developed springs and other water sources that have supported their cattle, but also countless numbers of wildlife that share the range. The latter benefit has been particularly valuable during recent droughts.

In towns like Adrian and Jordan Valley, ranching is the base of the community. Whether through hiring employees, or buying needed supplies for the ranch or their family, they are injecting money into the local community.

A monument designation larger than the states of Rhode Island and Connecticut would greatly restrict or eliminate grazing and other productive uses of the land. It will shake the foundation of these communities and cause harmful economic impacts to the county and the surrounding region.

I've worked with my colleagues in the House to include language in the funding bill for the Department of Interior prohibiting the creation of this national monument. Our farmers, ranchers and rural communities are most affected by the decisions made on public lands. I will continue to work to return the focus on locally driven management efforts, and stop these unilateral actions that lock up our public lands and negatively impact our communities.

The Obama administration has done enough damage to the West through their overzealous regulations. We don't need a presidential declaration locking up more of our public lands and choking our local ranch economy.

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden represents Oregon's Second Congressional District, which covers 20 counties in southern, central and Eastern Oregon.

Be heard! Comment online at eastoregonian.com