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OUR VIEW

Umatilla River a gem with more potential

As the city of Pendleton grew in the late 1800s, the Umatilla River running through its core was a liability.

Spring floods every year threatened to wipe out downtown, so the levee was built. As a side effect, the city quite literally turned its back on the river — houses and businesses were constructed facing away and it was used as a dump for sewage and other refuse.

Thanks to a small group of dedicated visionaries, the community began embracing the river in the latter half of the 20th century and today it is one of the truly unique and valuable assets Pendleton boasts.

A big part of that is the two-and-a-half mile River Parkway, which gives residents and visitors alike access to the

natural beauty of the river. It took the tenacity of people like Amy Bedford, Marie Hall, Bud Moore and Hazel Hubel in the early days to get the project off the ground. They saw the potential, and thanks to their willingness to go against the stream and petition property owners and city leaders to support the cause,

they were able to rally enough support to build the path.

That kind of creativity and dedication is such an important part of Pendleton's DNA. It's a city where a good idea has a chance to flourish because people are willing to put in the effort to make it happen.

There is so much more that can be done with the river, and we're

hopeful to see a new generation of leaders step up and take the challenge. Not only could the parkway be extended in any number of directions to show off more of the area's natural beauty, amenities like boat ramps and other river access points would give recreationalists a reason to visit and even move here.

Remember, a river running through town is not a luxury most places have. Name another city

where Main Street literally crosses a stream full of salmon, and which is walkable almost every day of the year. It's a dream for anglers, birdwatchers and joggers alike.

What was once a feared adversary is now a prized resource. We're lucky to have it, and people who will make the most of it.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A man rides his bicycle down the River Parkway on Wednesday in Pendleton.

Salmon, temps on a collision course

You don't have to be an expert on Northwest salmon to know they have been on a collision course with rising temperatures. There have been news items in recent years — including this summer — about returning salmon sweltering and dying in the Klamath Basin and the Willamette River.

It stands to reason that adult fish returning from years in cold ocean waters will struggle when the water — and hence their own body temperature — is drastically higher than what they are used to. Like most organisms, salmon are adaptable to a point and there is much variation between different species and runs. But every creature has its limits, and the 21st century's climate has started testing the outer boundaries of adaptability for many Columbia Basin salmon.

There was news last Tuesday of an agreement by NOAA Fisheries to work with Oregon officials over the next three years to begin dealing with rising water temperatures by locating, protecting and restoring cold-water habitat in the Columbia and Willamette.

This is overdue. As early as 2001, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a major report about the impacts of rising water temps on salmon and other fish species. (www.tinyurl.com/FishTempStudy) It found a complex situation, but

came to an overall conclusion that many species are harmed by higher temps.

For example, "salmonid stocks that make long-distance migrations to inland spawning grounds during the summer and fall may be more vulnerable to increased water temperatures and loss of cold-water refuges."

What constitutes cold water differs from species to species, but species of vital interest in the Columbia River require colder water than they often now encounter. For instance, fall/summer Chinook prefer a spawning temperature of 41 to 56 degrees; spring Chinook 40 to 64; coho and steelhead 50 to 55; sockeye

36 to 46.

In its latest work, NOAA Fisheries identifies 68 degrees as the level at which some major species become weak and diseased or died. They may have trouble spawning or thriving well before that point.

It is vital to find and protect places along the salmon migration route where they can be refreshed by colder water. This will likely impact some accustomed fishing places and will further complicate fishing seasons. The Columbia's treaty tribes certainly must share in this effort.

Salmon and the fishermen who rely on them need careful nurturing as this warm century progresses.

It is vital to find and protect places along the salmon migration route where they can be refreshed by colder water.



OTHER VIEWS

Despair, American style

A couple of weeks ago President Barack Obama mocked Republicans who are "down on America," and reinforced his message by doing a pretty good Grumpy Cat impression. He had a point: With job growth at rates not seen since the 1990s, with the percentage of Americans covered by health insurance hitting record highs, the doom-and-gloom predictions of his political enemies look ever more at odds with reality.

Yet there is a darkness spreading over part of our society. And we don't really understand why.

There has been a lot of comment, and rightly so, over a new paper by the economists Angus Deaton (who just won a Nobel) and Anne Case, showing that mortality among middle-aged white Americans has been rising since 1999. This deterioration took place while death rates were falling steadily both in other countries and among other groups in our own nation.

Even more striking are the proximate causes of rising mortality. Basically, white Americans are, in increasing numbers, killing themselves, directly or indirectly. Suicide is way up, and so are deaths from drug poisoning and the chronic liver disease that excessive drinking can cause. We've seen this kind of thing in other times and places — for example, in the plunging life expectancy that afflicted Russia after the fall of Communism. But it's a shock to see it, even in an attenuated form, in America.

Yet the Deaton-Case findings fit into a well-established pattern. There have been a number of studies showing that life expectancy for less-educated whites is falling across much of the nation. Rising suicides and overuse of opioids are known problems. And while popular culture may focus more on meth than on prescription painkillers or good old alcohol, it's not really news that there's a drug problem in the heartland.

But what's causing this epidemic of self-destructive behavior?

If you believe the usual suspects on the right, it's all the fault of liberals. Generous social programs, they insist, have created a culture of dependency and despair, while secular humanists have undermined traditional values. But (surprise!) this view is very much at odds with the evidence.

For one thing, rising mortality is a uniquely American phenomenon — yet America has both a much weaker welfare state and a much stronger role for traditional religion and values than any other advanced country. Sweden gives its poor far more aid than we do, and a majority of Swedish children are now born out



PAUL KRUGMAN
Comment

of wedlock, yet Sweden's middle-aged mortality rate is only half of white America's.

You see a somewhat similar pattern across regions within the United States. Life expectancy is high and rising in the Northeast and California, where social benefits are highest and traditional values weakest. Meanwhile, low and stagnant or declining life expectancy is concentrated in the Bible Belt.

What about a materialist explanation? Is rising mortality a consequence of rising inequality and the hollowing out of the middle class?

Well, it's not that simple. We are, after all, talking about the consequences of behavior, and culture clearly matters a great deal. Most notably, Hispanic Americans are considerably poorer than whites but have much lower mortality. It's probably worth noting, in this context, that international comparisons consistently find that Latin Americans have higher subjective well-being than you would expect, given their incomes.

So what is going on? In a recent interview Deaton suggested that middle-aged whites have "lost the narrative of their lives." That is, their economic setbacks have hit hard because they expected better. Or to put it a bit differently, we're looking at people who were raised to believe in the American Dream, and are coping badly with its failure to come true.

That sounds like a plausible hypothesis to me, but the truth is that we don't really know why despair appears to be spreading across Middle America. But it clearly is, with troubling consequences for our society as a whole.

In particular, I know I'm not the only observer who sees a link between the despair reflected in those mortality numbers and the volatility of right-wing politics. Some people who feel left behind by the American story turn self-destructive; others turn on the elites they feel have betrayed them. No, deporting immigrants and wearing baseball caps bearing slogans won't solve their problems, but neither will cutting taxes on capital gains. So you can understand why some voters have rallied around politicians who at least seem to feel their pain.

At this point you probably expect me to offer a solution. But while universal health care, higher minimum wages, aid to education, and so on would do a lot to help Americans in trouble, I'm not sure whether they're enough to cure existential despair.

Paul Krugman joined *The New York Times* in 1999 as a columnist on the *Op-Ed Page* and continues as professor of Economics and International Affairs at Princeton University.

YOUR VIEWS

Parkway a public treasure

The Pendleton River Parkway falls within the oversight of the Oregon Juniper Unit, an organization that works with environmental groups in preserving wildlife and wilderness areas. We had nothing to do with this parkway, but as a member of the unit, I compliment the people involved in making this parkway available to the public.

Mrs. Amy Bedford was the major influence in making the parkway possible. I remember her gracious manner and determination and her ability to persuade owners of land now included in the parkway to donate property. When others seemed discouraged, she never gave up. I wish she were here today to see what she started.

We owe a thanks to Mrs. Bedford and to the land owners for their generosity. It is indeed a pleasure to hear such good news in a land disrupted by so much violence.

Did you see the beautiful beaver along the Umatilla River in E. J. Harris' photograph?
Dr. Dorys C. Grover
Pendleton

'Pet' projects can wait

Pendleton leaders our forcing extremely high taxes for roads and infrastructure on the citizens. We need \$100 million just for roads

and infrastructure, not to mention that they are reallocating the funds we have to Barnhart Road, which is jeopardizing our economy.

Now they want to spend more money on pet projects, literally, a dog park — really! The location is just ridiculous and very few will use it. Extending the parkway? We need to do one thing at a time (you know, our roads and infrastructure). What does a person have to say to the planners and leaders of Pendleton? If we cannot afford the necessary basics for our town (like infrastructure and roads) is it not obvious we cannot afford anything else at this point?

Pendleton leaders and planners are so careless with our money, and so far out of touch with how a city really works. We do not have the money for all your new taxes, let alone money for your pet projects! Maybe we should actually bring business to town first. Once our roads, infrastructure and our budget are secured and maybe, just maybe we have a little extra money to spend, then we can have a conversation on pet projects, not before.

Whether these projects actually materialize or not, the fact they are talking about this in the first place should convince the citizens of Pendleton that our leaders do not have our best interests at heart.

Chris Hallos
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

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