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OUR VIEW



AP Photo/Jae C. Hong

A scorched tree and devastated mobile homes are backdropped by a wildfire continuing to burn June 25 in South Lake, Calif.

Fire season arrives in Eastern Oregon

Fire season officially kicked off Tuesday in Eastern Oregon.

It has already been a brutal start to the season elsewhere across the West: Two people were killed in California wildfires that have burned about 100,000 acres. Other dangerous and destructive fires have flared up in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Montana and Utah.

Although locally this was a more moisture-rich winter and spring than in recent years, Oregon will certainly not be spared the wrath of wildfires. On Monday, a grass fire quickly imperiled a number of Pendleton homes, and a month ago a fire at the old chemical depot burned up plenty of acres and caused numerous car accidents.

How bad is it going to be?

The National Interagency Fire Center has the entire state rated “normal” for wildfire potential clear through September. That’s an upgrade, actually. In recent years, most of the state was in the “above-normal” danger category from June through August.

We should be better off this year, with decent snowpack keeping things green and also keeping recreationalists out of the backcountry longer. But as those areas open up, it’s important to remember the additional responsibilities required when out in a parched world.

Take heed of local fire restrictions. As the season progresses, they will be sure to get more restrictive, and with good reason. Bans went in place today for local wildlife refuges, including Cold Springs, McKay Creek,

McNary and Umatilla. Those bans include fires of all sorts, even grills.

Keep campfires and debris fires under control. Even when and where

they are allowed, err on the side of caution. Scorching weather, brisk winds and dry grass can cause even the smallest of fires to quickly erupt. Use established fire rings and don’t leave a campfire unattended. Of course, when leaving make sure the fire is dead out.

Bring the right tools. Water is a

must, obviously. But bring a shovel or axe when rooting around with a motorized vehicle, and make sure your ATV is equipped with a spark arrester. They are required on most public lands, and there is a cleanout requirement, too, so be sure to invest in regular maintenance.

If you have to smoke, be smart when discarding your embers. Million-acre fires have been sparked by cigarette butts thrown in the most careless of places.

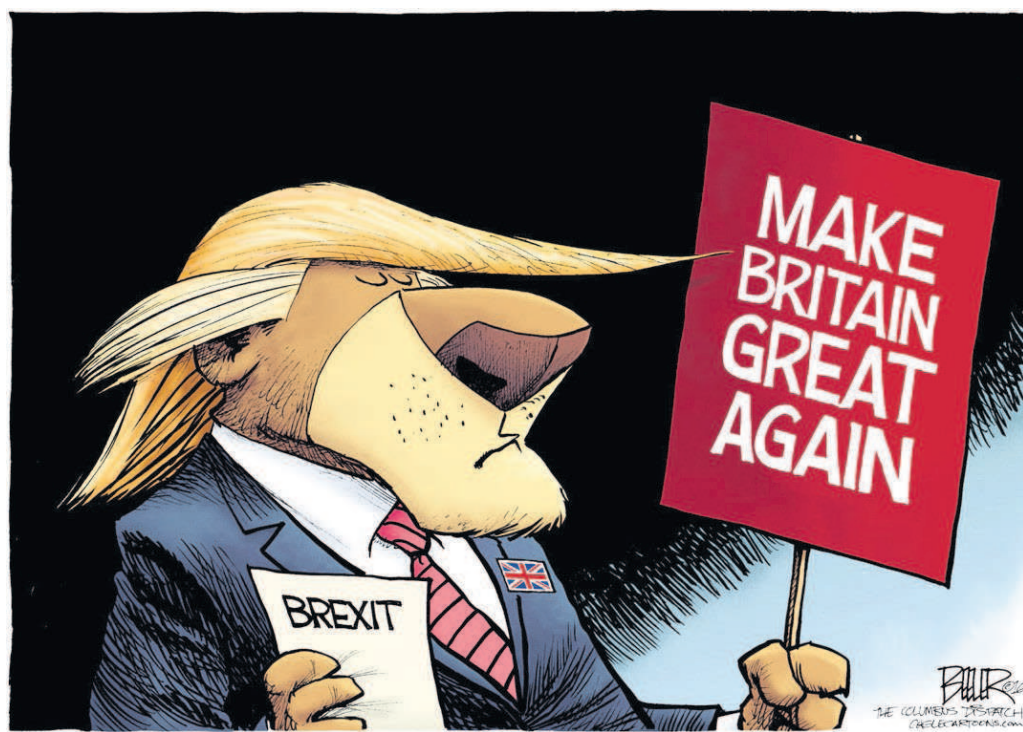
There is nothing more American than fireworks on the Fourth of July, but it’s best to abstain when you live in the desert. Be smart if you shoot off your own, but you’re better off saving your money and letting a professional put on the show.

In general, the public won’t be able to stop every fire. Hot weather and lightning and unhealthy forests mean there are bound to be plenty of blazes out of our control. But if we can be protectors instead of contributors, Eastern Oregon will be a more comfortable place this summer — not choked out by smoke and not costing our government millions of dollars to fight man-made fires.

There’s nothing more American than fireworks on the Fourth of July, but when you live in the desert it’s best to abstain.

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



The overlooked substance in Donald Trump’s speech

Most coverage of Donald Trump’s recent speech in New York focused on his attacks on Hillary Clinton. Or the fact that he read the speech from a teleprompter. Or the fact that it came amid a period of disorder and change in his campaign.

But Trump included actual substance in the speech — new policy proposals and promises — that escaped many observers. In a series of pledges to take action in his first 100 days as president, Trump said he would move on trade, business regulation, energy, and several other topics.

One area in which Trump promised to take extensive and quick executive action is immigration, with a pledge to “change immigration rules to give unemployed Americans an opportunity to fill good-paying jobs.”

What Trump meant is that there are parts of U.S. immigration policy — significant parts — that could be changed through executive action, or regulation, or simply enforcing existing law. For example, there are programs for the admission of foreign workers — the various alphabet programs like H-1B visas, EB-2 and EB-3 green cards, etc. — that have weak or nonexistent requirements that businesses hire, or try to hire, an American first. It’s a concept that has huge public support, but one the government does not enforce. A President Trump could change that, on his own authority.

“A president could direct the Department of Homeland Security to promulgate rules that interpret immigration laws in ways that are more favorable to American workers,” noted John Miano of the Center for Immigration Studies, a group that favors more restrictions on immigration, in an email exchange.

Miano pointed to one provision of the law, 8 USC 1182(a)(5), which he said gives a president enormous leeway in pursuing an Americans-first policy. “Any alien who seeks to enter the United States for the purpose of performing skilled or unskilled labor is inadmissible,” the law reads, “unless the Secretary of Labor has determined that ... 1) there are not sufficient workers who are able, willing, qualified ... and available at the time of application for a visa and admission to the United States and at the place where the alien is to perform such skilled or unskilled labor, and 2) the employment of such alien will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of workers in the United States similarly employed.”



BYRON YORK
Comment

Interpretation of the law has been “inconsistent,” Miano said. In this way: A later clause stipulates that the provision just quoted “shall apply” to certain types of green cards. “The Department of Homeland Security and the Immigration and Naturalization Service have generally interpreted that to mean ‘shall only apply’” to certain types of green cards, Miano wrote. “Trump’s team could change the regulations to interpret ‘shall apply’... as applying to ‘any alien,’ as the plain text reads.”

The result could be a decided shift toward government enforcing laws directing that jobs go to Americans before foreign workers.

Trump promised to take extensive and quick executive action on immigration.

Ron Hira, of Howard University, noted that for many immigrant work categories, a president could change the so-called “recruitment requirement,” that is, the requirement that businesses make a good faith effort to hire an American worker before

hiring a foreign worker. Some immigration categories have weak and easily circumvented recruitment requirements, and some have none at all, Hira told me in an email exchange.

“For almost all H-1Bs, there is no recruitment requirement whatsoever,” Hira said. “There are no recruitment requirements for L-1 workers. Ditto for B-1.”

“I think there’s quite a bit of latitude for the next president to promulgate tighter recruitment rules for various work visas,” Hira wrote. “The upshot is that I think Trump could write much tighter (better) rules to ensure that the program operates more closely as it is intended.”

Miano and Hira both listed other areas in which a president could make immigration and employment policy more American-friendly. It’s an approach that many politicians, including Barack Obama, have said they favor but have not, in fact, pursued.

The immigration and work pledge in Trump’s speech was all of 13 words long. But there was a lot of thinking behind it. It meant something. And it was just one part of a wide-ranging address; Trump placed his plans in a bigger context that could have real resonance in the general election campaign, especially in the rust-belt states which could play a big role in the outcome.

“There is one common theme in all of these reforms,” Trump said. “It’s going to be America First.”

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

YOUR VIEWS

Leave Til Taylor Park alone, keep sheriff’s legacy intact

Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo and Pendleton City Council:

It is with deep regret that again we are discussing the destruction of the Til Taylor Park, a historical part of Pendleton.

Til Taylor was my great-grandfather and a wonderful man who for many years represented not only law enforcement but the Pendleton Round-Up. He stands tall and proud before the wall of fallen law enforcement officers who died while protecting not only people of Umatilla County but the whole state of Oregon.

Our family has twice in my lifetime had to defend the moving of my great-grandfather’s statue and the closing of the park. First it was Sheriff John Trumbo wanting to move it to the Umatilla County Jail site, where the memorial would not be seen; the next was the city wanting to move it to Main Street, where there are fewer and fewer businesses, where again the fallen would not be remembered.

Already two of the reflecting pools have been removed. The one that remains has been converted to a wonderful place for young people to enjoy their summers, a place to picnic and play.

It is sad to see our parks being eliminated. It is hard enough to encourage our young people to know where their heritage came from without destroying what little evidence and places of enjoyment we have left.

As Mayor Phil Houk stated in the tribute to my great-grandfather and other law enforcement officers who have been killed in the line of duty, this is a prime location for people to see and respect their courage in the protection of the citizens of Umatilla County and the state of Oregon. People drive by this monument everyday coming into and out of Pendleton.

You would rather give up Pendleton’s history than put a fire station on property that is already vacant, all because of the almighty dollar. Money is not everything in the decision that is to be made. It should also be for the history and enjoyment of people who use the park.

My mother Dolores G. (Taylor) Sheard, my uncle Tillman Taylor and my aunt Nylene (Taylor) Graham have all in the past voice a strong no in moving his statue or destroying a place for families to enjoy. Since all three have passed I find that it has fallen to his great-grandchildren to also voice our no.

Debra (Sheard) Carter
Athena

Union Pacific has no ability to change brake system

Your recent criticism of the Union Pacific Railroad (“Tip of the hat; kick in the pants,” June 24) grossly misrepresented both the company’s responsibility regarding the brake systems used on oil trains and the facts of the diesel fuel leak near Troutdale.

The piece quotes a sound bite that the railroad uses a “brake system that is from the Civil War era.”

While that is an accurate description of a system invented in 1868, it fails to convey that the Union Pacific lacks the ability to use another system. The railroad does not own the oil cars in question; they are leased to customers by a third party. Furthermore, American railroads interchange cars with each other and with Canadian and Mexican railroads. Cars are required to meet Association of American Railroads (AAR) interchange rules to ensure compatibility with other lines.

You also misrepresented the impact of the fuel spill and the amount of fuel spilled. The editorial stated that “thousands of gallons of diesel” leaked “into the water table and the Columbia River.”

It was nice to see the correction buried at the bottom of the page the next day, that none of the 300 gallons of spilled fuel

contaminated the water table, (Correction June 25), but you failed to report that no fuel leaked into the river either.

Regarding Thomas Jameson’s comment in “Quick takes” (June 25), I have good news: Union Pacific does not run oil trains through Pendleton, they run south out of Spokane and turn west at the yard near Hermiston.

William W. Webb Jr.
Echo

Wolves doing fine, thank you

I found a game camera that is interactive. It was located near den number 77. The camera helped me learn how Fish and Game humans were going to manage my packs.

I really don’t need their help. I managed to spread our packs out to Washington, California and Nevada since we arrived from Idaho.

I managed to get \$800,000 from humans in Salem to protect us. I managed to teach my packs how to kill cattle and sheep without leaving enough evidence behind to identify the meal as a wolf kill and, finally, I have managed to increase our pack numbers dramatically in the short time we have been here.

A. Wolf, grand packmaster
(as told to Mike Mehren, wolf listener
Hermiston)