

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

JANNA HEIMGARTNER
Business Office Manager

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Free flow of information missing from wolf policy

Managing wildlife — especially hot button predators such as wolves — requires total openness on the part of all parties. Ranchers, conservationists, members of the public and even critics need to have access to timely and accurate information.

By trying to manage information, officials in Washington state are creating a void that has been filled by rumors and misinformed opinions.

The folks at the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife have found that out the hard way. They established a policy of releasing information once a week about their efforts to remove the Profanity Peak wolfpack after it repeatedly killed cattle in the area.

It could be expected that some opponents of removal would not like the removal decision. The fact that the agency choked off information about the management efforts only inflamed those passions.

Others, including a Washington State University carnivore researcher, jumped into the fray, providing “facts” that weren’t accurate and further fanning the flames.

As a result, the ranchers and the wildlife managers even received death threats and WDFW had a

full-on crisis on its hands.

Amaroq Weiss, a representative of the Center for Biological Diversity, told others at a recent rally that nobody should be threatened.

“That has no place in this discussion at all,” she told a *Capital Press* reporter afterward.

The tragedy of recent events is magnified by the fact that the state spent \$800,000 to reboot its wolf advisory group in an effort to open a civilized discussion of wolf management. The members of the group — representing ranchers, conservationists and others — were ultimately able to forge a working relationship. They even developed a new policy for removing wolves that repeatedly kill livestock.

All of that hard work is now at risk.

The free flow of timely and accurate information is the only way to restore any level of trust in the department, its policies and its managers. The WDFW must provide information on wolf removal and other developments when they happen and let everyone know what’s happening and why.

We hope the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is taking notice, and doesn’t fall into the same trap of keeping information locked up.

It could be expected that some opponents of removal would not like the removal decision. The fact that the agency choked off information about the efforts only inflamed those passions.

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.

YOUR VIEWS

Owyhee protection won’t happen by itself

I’m not a special interest lobbyist or rancher. I live in Harney County and am part of a growing “everyone” in Oregon who favors permanent protection for the Owyhee Canyonlands — free from mining, oil and gas development; free from looters of ancient Native American sites; free for animals to roam; free for 23 species of unusual plants that only grow there to flourish untrammelled.

My husband and I have rafted the Owyhee from Rome downwards; visited spectacular campsites in Leslie Gulch, Three Forks and Succor Creek; followed many of the rough dirt tracks into remote areas between Burns Junction and McDermitt. Sat high above the Owyhee River on basalt ledges, peered into emptiness and listened to the silence — absolute, vast silence, sometimes broken by a bird on the wing or shuffles of breeze through grasses. Few places offer silence. Those who understand what it is to match that silence with a deep quiet within understand and care about its value.

Much of the area proposed for protection is accessible only a few months a year — too hot, too cold, too arid, and, in storm seasons, dangerous to venture out into starkly remote areas. Fires are common. In wet seasons, roads become thick puree. In some areas, the roads become slivers of hard lava that slices tires like a scythe.

I’ve seen evidence of overgrazing near fragile water resources, and a lot of cheat grass and other invasives. It’s been years since the BLM has made a resource assessment. There’s no money. “Ranchers are taking care of these lands” is an oft-quoted phrase. To claim all ranchers are responsible land stewards is

the same as claiming all who fish, hike and camp are environmentalists.

Two Congressional proposals would have led to greater protection for the Owyhee Canyonlands and enabled local ranchers and farmers to control their future.

One would have designated them as wilderness study or conservation areas — making possible collaboration with local farmers and ranchers for their management.

The other would prevent mineral, oil and gas extraction, at the same time expanding programs to develop efficient water storage systems for livestock, improve roads, train veterans and young people for farming and ranching jobs, and expand local agricultural research.

I was happy with either proposal. They got tied up in a dysfunctional Congress and thick barrage of misinformation.

What’s left? Making the area into a national monument.

I’m all for it.

Diane Rapaport
Hines, Ore.

Tone down violent football rhetoric

I was very much appalled at the language used by the Stanfield football coach whose article on the game that was in Saturday’s *East Oregonian*. “Killer instinct?” “Punish teams?” This is small school high school football, not the NFL, and Stanfield had won the game by 32 points.

Go ahead, have a good season, we all like to win. Just remember the teams are playing against their area fellow students, not the enemy.

Katie Weinke
Pilot Rock

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. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. 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. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

We are all Noah now

Robert Macfarlane, in his book “Landmarks,” about the connection between words and landscapes, tells a revealing but stunning story about how recent editions of the Oxford Junior Dictionary (aimed at 7-year-olds) dropped certain “nature words” that its editors deemed less relevant to the lives of modern children. These included “acorn,” “dandelion,” “fern,” “nectar,” “otter,” “pasture” and “willow.” The terms introduced in their place, he noted, included “broadband,” “blog,” “cut-and-paste,” “MP3 player” and “voice-mail.”

While this news was first disclosed in 2015, reading it in Macfarlane’s book still shocks me for what it signifies. But who can blame the Oxford editors for dumping Amazon words for Amazon.com ones? Our natural world is rapidly disappearing. Just how fast was the major topic here last week at the global conference held every four years by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, which I participated in along with some 8,000 scientists, nature reserve specialists and environmentalists.

The dominant theme running through the IUCN’s seminars was the fact that we are bumping up against and piercing planetary boundaries — on forests, oceans, ice melt, species extinctions and temperature — from which Mother Nature will not be able to recover. When the coral and elephants are all gone, no 3-D printer will be able to recreate them.

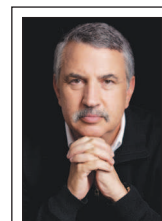
In short, we and our kids are rapidly becoming the Noah generation, charged with saving the last pairs. (This is no time to be electing a climate-change denier like Donald Trump for president.)

Sylvia Earle, the renowned oceanographer, put it well to a sustainability conference hosted here by the East-West Center alongside the IUCN meetings. In her lifetime, said Earle, she has felt as if she’s been “witness to the greatest era of discovery and the greatest era of loss” in our planet’s history.

So now, she said, “we are at a crossroads. What we do right now or fail to do will determine the future — not just for us, but for all life on Earth.”

Those really are the stakes — there is a reason nature words are being removed from children’s dictionaries. Last week, for instance, *The Times* reported on a study that revealed how “the African elephant population is in drastic decline, having shrunk about 30 percent from 2007 to 2014. ... The deterioration is accelerating: Largely because of poaching, the population is dropping 8 percent a year, according to the Great Elephant Census. ... Patricia Awori, an official with the African Elephant Coalition, said, ‘These numbers are shocking.’”

OK, so you don’t care that your kids may never see an elephant in the wild, only in a zoo. That’s not all. The species extinction rate is now about “1,000 times



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

faster than before the global spread of humanity,” explained the great biodiversity expert E.O. Wilson, another speaker here. “Half of the species described today will be gone by the end of the century, unless we take drastic action.”

These species, he noted, evolved over 3.5 billion years “to create an exquisite and careful balance of interconnected resilience.”

These plants and animals and their ecosystems sustain the foundations of life on which we depend. When we lose the trees that maintain watersheds, the coastal mangroves that protect against storm surges, the glaciers that store fresh water and the coral reefs that feed fish, we humans become less resilient. Indeed, strip them all away, said Wilson, “and the world as we know it will unravel.”

The magazine *Discover* just noted that we’ve been tracking average temperature over global land and ocean surfaces since 1880 — or for 1,639 months. Due to global warming, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that July 2016 was the hottest “of all 1,639 months on record.”

That is why actress Alison Sudol, an IUCN goodwill ambassador, opened the plenary by observing that our planet is now “under attack” — by us.

“Our vast oceans, full of mysteries and wonders, are thick with plastic and mercury,” she noted. “Rain forests — abundant sources of oxygen and medicine; land of ancient lore and tradition; home to thousands of species of wildlife, many as yet unknown to us — are being plowed down before we have a chance to properly discover what it is we are losing.”

“These are lungs of the Earth, the oceans and the forests, and we are destroying them. Deeply, desperately, we are hoping someone will do something before it is too late. That someone we are hoping for is you.”

So do we have a plan? Wilson has one — a big, audacious plan. It’s the title of his latest book, “Half-Earth,” a call to action to commit half of the planet’s surface — land and oceans — to protected zones.

Right now, the IUCN says, close to 15 percent of the Earth’s land and 10 percent of its territorial waters are covered by national parks and protected areas. If we protect half the global surface, Wilson argues, the fraction of species protected will be about 85 percent, which would keep life on Earth, including the human species, in a safe zone.

Naive, you say? Not so. Naive is thinking we humans will survive without the healthy natural systems that got us here. Naiveté is the new realism — or else we, the human species, will become just another bad biological experiment.

Thomas L. Friedman won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, his third Pulitzer for *The New York Times*. He became the paper’s foreign-affairs columnist in 1995.

OTHER VIEWS

Beware punitive rules for work schedules

The (Corvallis) Gazette-Times, Aug. 31

Keep an eye on a proposal in Seattle that would require retail and food-service businesses with hourly employees to schedule their shifts at least two weeks in advance.

The so-called “secure scheduling” proposal also would require businesses to compensate workers in the event of last-minute schedule changes.

Here’s why this is worth watching: How the proposal fares in Seattle could play a role in determining whether Oregon’s 2017 Legislature attempts to pass a similar measure.

There is precedent here to keep in mind: Seattle was among the first U.S. cities to phase in an increase in the minimum wage and to mandate sick leave for many companies — two ideas that were later adopted by Oregon legislators. (In the case of the scheduling proposal, however, San Francisco has been the national leader, passing similar legislation in 2014.)

And we know there is interest in this idea among Oregon legislators.

In fact, the 2015 regular legislative session spent some time working on a predictive scheduling proposal, House Bill 3377, which eventually died in committee. Among other provisions, that bill penalized businesses that made changes in work schedules less than three weeks in advance. For example: If an employer had to change a work schedule with less than three weeks’ notice, the employer would have been obligated to pay an employee for one additional hour in addition to the time

actually worked. If an employer had to change a shift with less than 24 hours’ notice, the business would have to pay an additional four hours in addition to the time actually worked.

In addition to its punitive nature, the bill certainly would have created a paperwork nightmare and added untold layers of difficulty to the already challenging work of scheduling employees. It also would have made it more difficult for workers who needed a last-minute shift to their schedules, as employers tried to work through the various sets of rules governing those schedule changes.

The bill died in committee, but not because of its merits: Rather, as part of a compromise to push the sick-leave bill through the session, legislators put the scheduling idea on hold until the 2017 session.

In the meantime, legislators convened a work group on “schedules that work” and invited a number of business organizations to join. But the business organizations, dismayed at the anti-business attitude they saw in the work group, dropped out after the first meeting.

And that’s where matters stood, at least until news of the Seattle proposal broke this week.

Considering Seattle’s history, though, it seems more likely to assume that the proposal will be approved there. And that could help pave the way for an Oregon proposal in 2017 — and could give businesspeople yet another reason to wonder why the state’s leaders are so intent on making it so tough to run a business here.