

## Quick takes

### Women's march in Pendleton

I guess I don't understand what rights they think will be taken away. Did I miss that memo? As far as I've seen/heard, we are still Americans. We still have the Bill of Rights and the Constitution.

— Tracy Smith

The fact anyone would be threatened by or angered by a peaceful walk speaks volumes. Why be threatened by women's right to be heard?

— Rachele Underwood

I'm ashamed to live in this time. Is there a march I can join to let Trump know how much I support him ... how he has given me hope after a long eight years? Let's start that march.

— Jackuelyn Simpson

This is awesome! Glad to see women uniting for women's rights!

— Sandra Lee

### Rough weather and roads

Our roads are trash. Amazing how I can drive from Kennewick to just north of Hermiston on 395 on bare, dry pavement and just before the first light I have to put it in 4wd and learn how to ice skate.

— Jeremy Clark

Oregon really needs to take a hard look at how they deal with winter roads. When you can't get commerce and freight in and out of the city, you have a problem.

— Chante Drew

Driving uphill in Heppner, just slipped on slushy ice on street because the severe wind blew me sideways!

— Alan Scott

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.

# The case for condors in Eastern Oregon

By ANGELA C. SONDENAA  
Writers on the Range

California condors may not be recent inhabitants of the Hells Canyon area of Eastern Oregon, but there is evidence that the giant vultures lived in the area as recently as the 19th century. I note this because some critics say that the Nez Perce Tribe and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should not collaborate to assess Hells Canyon as a possible condor reintroduction site.

While the written record is sparse, there are credible accounts of condors living in the region. In 1879, U.S. Army Gen. T.E. Wilcox observed two condors feeding on a sheep carcass near present-day Boise, Idaho. Wilcox further reported that, according to local cattlemen, condors were "not uncommon" in the area before they started dying out, largely from eating poisoned carcasses intended to kill wolves.

In 1818, fur trapper Donald McKenzie also reported seeing condors flying in the river canyons of northeast Oregon. These reports effectively bookend the northern and southern extent of the Hells Canyon segment of the Snake River.

The dearth of early written accounts should not surprise anyone familiar with the extremely remote, rugged terrain of the Snake River. This entire region was actively avoided by early European settlers, who considered it impassible and inhospitable. Few outsiders had an opportunity to observe the wildlife that flourished there. Fewer still recorded what they saw.

Yet the people who actually lived in Hells Canyon have a known relationship and history with condors. The Nez Perce (NiMiiPuu) have inhabited the Snake River canyon since time immemorial, and condor references can be found in the NiMiiPuu language (condor = qúnes), oral traditions, place names and creation stories.

Viewed collectively, the cultural evidence for condors is compelling. Perhaps most significant is a reference to Joseph Canyon,

a Snake River tributary, as ananasocum, which translates to "the place (canyon) where condors used to be." In his account, tribal elder Otis Halfmoon also describes condors nesting in local caves, which clearly indicates a resident breeding population.

But you still might ask: Why do tribal members want to bring the birds back now? Our answer is that Hells Canyon appears well suited for condors.

It contains a large proportion of public lands, has abundant food resources, supports apex predators like wolves, provides excellent geography for soaring raptors, contains relatively few people, and has little human development. The entire Hells Canyon ecosystem would also benefit from the essential ecological services provided by these scavengers.

Furthermore, existing condor populations are still small and vulnerable to catastrophic events, so creating additional and separate populations could help reduce the risk of possible genetic losses. Adding new populations would also help restore the diverse geographic structure of condor populations throughout their historical range, including the Pacific Northwest.

Retired condor biologist Sanford Wilbur states that some local people might see these recovery efforts as yet more overreach by the federal government. What he fails to consider is the people's tremendous capacity to marshal their shared conservation ethic on behalf of these birds. Most local landowners, ranchers, farmers and hunters embody and carry out a land ethic of stewardship and responsibility. They know that they must care for the land and its associated fish, wildlife and plant species if they want that land to continue to support their livelihoods

and well-being. This is a truth the NiMiiPuu have known for generations.

The biggest challenge to condor recovery is lead poisoning from spent bullet fragments. Some may view this as a good reason not to pursue condor reintroduction, but lead poisoning affects many other

wildlife species, too. This is an issue that needs to be addressed whether condors are ultimately reintroduced or not.

Fortunately, it is not an insurmountable problem since copper-based bullets are highly effective and increasingly available to shooters. Lead-free ammunition also helps ensure safer food for human consumption, which is itself a compelling reason to switch. Making the

switch is the next step in continuing a proud legacy of sportsmen contributing to wildlife conservation.

Skeptics sometimes ask, "Why fiddle with Mother Nature?" The truth is that humans have always fiddled with Mother Nature, and we will continue to do so, simply because of our increasing population. Human-induced factors have long played an adversarial role in the decline of many species, including condors. But common sense, science-based conservation efforts can help to rectify our past mistakes.

The success of any project, however, must rely on public support. Condors need our help to maintain healthy populations, and it's inspiring to think that Hells Canyon could once again provide these magnificent birds with a wild and healthy home.

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## How best to clean up Portland's poisoned harbor?

The Oregonian/OregonLive

The biggest, most expensive federal action aimed at Portland in years arrived recently but was quickly lost on the local radar to snowstorms, icy streets and weather-related deaths. After 16 years of study, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency determined that more than 100 industries here or once doing business here, along with the city and the Port of Portland, must pay more than \$1 billion to clean up a 10-mile segment of the Willamette River known as Portland Harbor.

No one disputes the harbor, historically the beating heart of Portland's industrial commerce, is a toxic mess. PCBs and other nasty long-life chemicals line river-bottom sediments, in some places in concentrations so high as to signal public health warnings. Folks who regularly consume resident fish from the harbor are told about cancer. Federally protected runs of migratory fish passing through the harbor are to lesser degree exposed but potentially compromised, a concern to tribes with treaty rights to salmon. That the harbor would be designated a federal Superfund site was long predicted, and now the hard-fought tab for cleaning it up has arrived. With such certainty, it has been widely believed, Portland can finally restore to health a sick segment of its marquee river.

But the peace running through Portland about the EPA's decision is tentative. And this bears close attention by participants in the cleanup and all who care, because the cleanup is critical for Portland and Oregon now and going forward.

Last summer the EPA estimated the cleanup would cost \$746 million but has now expanded it significantly by making river quality metrics tougher, and more expensive, to meet. The Port of Portland, for example, an owner of several properties in the port but never a major producer of its historic pollution, fears its share of cleanup costs could well exceed \$100 million — cash it does not have available and that cannot be drawn from airport operations, leaving the public exposed. Meanwhile, port officials chase Monsanto in court for having disseminated some of the PCBs that sully the Willamette. (Separately, the city has joined other West Coast cities in a class action lawsuit against Monsanto to generate cleanup money, as well.)

Still, plenty of folks are relieved, if not gleeful, that the EPA finally acted. That

includes Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Nick Fish, who will lead the city's efforts to hasten the cleanup; the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and its new director Richard Whitman, who coordinated with tribes to help EPA find a cleanup of sufficient scale to avoid litigation; and several environmental advocates, who drove a grassroots campaign to toughen the EPA's assessments and helped bring what seemed a never-ending federal process to a close.

But is Portland Superfund really real yet? Not quite. Sediment sampling from years ago needs redoing in places to gauge current toxicity levels, and yet more sampling will be

required to fully characterize a dynamic river before specialists attempt to map out the first steps of a projected 13-year cleanup. Significantly, companies on the hook to pay for the cleanup — the harbor's present industries as well as several long departed — must now meet with state and federal officials to show a willingness to get the job done and to pay their fair shares, still being tallied. Complicating everything, however, is something nobody predicted: a potential sea change in the views of the EPA, and possibly Congress, toward environmental regulation.

The inauguration Friday of Donald Trump, along with his nominee to head the EPA, Scott Pruitt, signal this potential change. The president-elect is a businessman who has disputed environmental policies. Pruitt has in his capacity as Oklahoma's attorney general sued EPA multiple times, if unsuccessfully, to block environmental regulations.

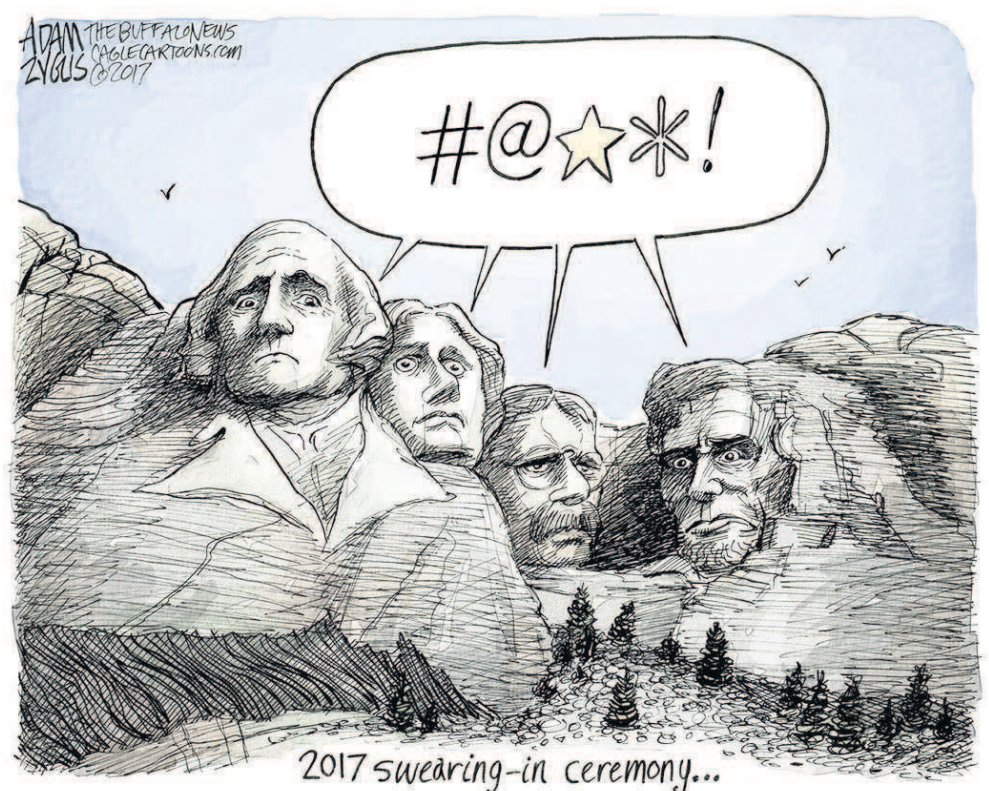
It could seriously fray, if not unravel, Portland's Superfund plan if unhappy responsible parties were to exploit ideological shifts in the new administration by seeking relief from Portland Superfund cleanup responsibilities. Any such attempts, if successful, would not create a lasting win for business but long-term losses for Portland and Oregon and all businesses seeking to prosper in a healthy river environment.

The Portland Harbor cleanup, taking shape at last, needs to happen. The city and the state, along with Northwest tribes and concerned citizens, have worked too hard for too long to help EPA reach this milestone. A restored Willamette River will mean better health not only for wildlife and for Oregonians but also a promising economy, revved up by a harbor known for its natural and commercial resilience and productivity.

The bill to clean 10 miles of the Willamette River is \$1 billion.



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Be heard!

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