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OUR VIEW

Still staking out middle ground on wolves

Wolves are never far from the minds of Oregonians, and never far from our front pages. Re-establishing a predator that had been absent from the state for a century has been a continual process with plenty of ups and downs. Many of us have come to terms with sharing our space with another apex predator, others are not quite there yet, and some never will be. Those whose economic livelihood is negatively impacted by wolves are understandably opposed to long-term population growth of animals that harass and sometimes kill livestock.

This week, two bits of recent news have once again changed the trajectory of the wolf debate.

The first is that wolves did not fare as well in 2016 as many experts predicted. After fast-paced population expansion from the northeast corner of the state in westerly and southerly directions, wolf populations saw little or no growth in the last year, according to the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife.

Although these counts are notoriously unscientific and likely missed many wolves living in Oregon, the results were still rather shocking.

Could wolves have run up against the limit of habitat where they can repopulate? Seems unlikely. Still, the surprising results require additional study and a tap on the brakes when it comes to parroting Oregon’s superior record, compared to neighboring states, on reintroduction.

And that brings us to the second bit of news. Nineteen Oregon legislators, all from the west side of the state, wrote a letter to Gov. Kate Brown and ODFW noting their opposition to any revision to the wolf plan that would allow for the hunting and trapping of wolves. They ended their letter with: “Taking a strong stand today (against wolf hunting) will help Oregon avoid the bitter social conflict and divisiveness sport hunting and trapping of wolves has caused in other states.”

We don’t buy it. Not being willing to consider hunting is what’s truly divisive, especially to us out here who are much more apt than our urban counterparts to fish and hunt.

We’ve always tried to be right down the middle on wolves. We understand their biological role in our ecosystem. We understand they need additional protections as they re-establish, especially from poachers who have ingrained disdain for the animal.

But we also think, once they are recovered, they should be managed like each and every animal in Oregon. We do not think 19 west side legislators (who likely have no wolf packs living in any of their districts) should be able to keep an important management tool and sporting opportunity from Oregonians.

In the future, Oregon should be home to a healthy population of wolves and a season for hunting them. Perhaps 2016’s poor results delay both, but it doesn’t mean either should be forgotten.

Two bits of recent news have once again changed the trajectory of the wolf debate in Oregon.

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.

LETTERS POLICY

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With Syria attack, Trump uses element of surprise — on his voters

Belligerence is in the air in Washington. President Trump is enjoying (extremely rare) bipartisan praise for a cruise-missile attack on Syria. There’s tough talk from some Republicans about more. And even tougher talk about Russia. North Korea, too.

Meanwhile, the public’s reaction is ... huh? For millions of American voters, the two most striking aspects of the U.S. action against Syria were 1) How quickly Trump moved, and 2) How little he explained his actions.

BYRON YORK
Comment

Explaining — laying the groundwork, making a case — is an essential part of presidential leadership.

That’s especially true when what is involved is an act of war. Leaders contemplating military action prepare the public to support that action. They explain why it is needed. They explain why it is in the national interest of the United States. Then they repeat the explanation.

No, that doesn’t mean they reveal exactly what they’re going to do and when they’re going to do it. Trump said many times on the campaign trail that he would not telegraph his actions to foreign adversaries. To do so, he said, would be to give up the critical element of surprise.

But leaders don’t surprise the voters with an out-of-the-blue act of war. In the case of Syria, Trump moved so quickly, and with such little effort at public persuasion beforehand, that he maintained the element of surprise on his own voters. That’s not a good idea.

Indeed, the public reaction, measured by early polls, is not optimistic for the president. After the attack, *Washington Post* pollsters asked, “Do you support or oppose President Trump’s decision to launch a missile strike on a Syrian air base in retaliation for the Syrian government using chemical weapons against civilians?” The result was 51 percent support, 40 percent oppose. Among registered voters, Trump’s support level was a bit higher at 57 percent.

Then the *Post* asked, “Would you support or oppose additional U.S. air strikes against the Syrian government at this time?” Just 35 percent said support, while 54 percent said oppose. Again, Trump’s support was a little better, 39 percent, among registered voters.

Either way, the fact is, the barest of majorities supports a new president sending military forces into action for the first time as commander-in-chief.

“They are not good numbers,” says Republican pollster David Winston. Winston points out that it is often hard to assess Trump’s poll results because he won the presidency with an unfavorable rating of 60 percent — that alone should tell everyone that Trump is a different kind of president, as far as polling is concerned. Nevertheless, it’s possible to conclude that support for more military action

appears tenuous at best — unless Trump makes the effort to build public support.

“He needs to realize that there is a level of explanation that he needs to do, particularly when you’re about to put American lives potentially at risk, given that starting point of 60 percent unfavorable,” Winston says. “It’s not that people are going to disagree with him, but when they hear something he has done, 60 percent of the country starts off with the viewpoint of, ‘That guy I don’t like.’”

Trump’s no-explanations style is particularly bad for his political fortunes because, beyond what he promised would be a quick, intense, and winning effort to destroy ISIS, he did not campaign on the idea of going to war. Just the opposite; Trump campaigned day after day on a platform of keeping the United States out of the mess in the Middle East. Trump often excoriated George W. Bush for the “big, fat mistake” of going to war in Iraq.

Now, Trump’s quick conversion to military action has left some prominent supporters unhappy — and warning of problems to come.

“The thing that’s most important right now for Donald Trump is to remember those core issues that he so successfully campaigned on,” conservative radio host Laura Ingraham said on Fox News Tuesday morning. “It was all focused on America first. Jobs, the economy, wages going up — that’s it.

“What I think is difficult at the same time is to manage this war footing that we increasingly seem to be on,” Ingraham continued. “I do have my concerns about this administration getting mired again in another conflict in the Middle East ... I’m not sure getting rid of Bashar al-Assad was at the top of the list of the people in Pennsylvania.”

At the same time, Trump is winning plaudits of those in his party who tried hardest to defeat him. Bill Kristol called the White House execution of the attack “impressive” and welcomed Trump as a potential convert to regime change. “It would be ironic if Trump, who campaigned against regime change, ends up pursuing it in both Syria and North Korea,” Kristol tweeted Tuesday. The day after the attack, Kristol tweeted, “Punishing Assad for use of chemical weapons is good. Regime change in Iran is the prize.”

No, that is probably not what Trump voters in Pennsylvania had in mind. If Trump has changed his views from what he said in the campaign, or even if he has simply decided that Syria should be a one-time exception to his general opposition to military interventionism, he owes voters all around the country more of an explanation than he has given so far.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.

ODOT needs to change dangerous intersection

Another person has been killed by a truck at the intersection of East Elm and Highway 395. The decision to designate this a truck route was bad to begin with and is worse now considering the increase in traffic.

I think it is time for the Oregon Department of Transportation to reconsider making East Punkin Center the east/west truck route, rather than the existing East Elm route. It might even be possible to make the intersection of East Punkin Center and Highway 395 a roundabout intersection.

Carlisle Harrison
Hermiston

Fuel standards important to farmers

Whether it’s for cattle or crops, farmers and ranchers have been on the forefront of conservation. Many frontline harvesters of the land and sea are also leading efforts to find new ways to cultivate and care for soil and water, fisheries and farmland. Partnerships, like the Renewable Fuels Standard, between the agriculture community and the alternative energy industry

show the valuable opportunities that can arise when we all come together.

Confronting our environmental problems requires us to remember that our states, our communities, and our professions — our people — are more complicated than we often think. But changes like this don’t come easy. Congress must stay consistent so that our industry can do what we do best. I encourage Congressman Greg Walden to maintain the RFS as it is and give Oregon’s agricultural community and economy the certainty to grow.

As a rancher, we want to leave the land, air and water a little better for our children. Long-term stability in biofuel production and the Renewable Fuel Standard is good for Oregon and the ranch.

Curtis Martin
North Powder

Old PGG building better site for fire hall

As a concerned citizen living here since 1948, and having come from being an engineer on the McNary Dam project, I have seen changes good and bad.

I agree we need a new fire station and equipment, but not

at the presently planned location of the old St. Anthony Hospital property, while the old Pendleton Grain Growers building is available.

It is cement-reinforced concrete and steel, which could easily be adapted to the needs of the fire station, at a much lower cost. The PGG property has plenty of room, both indoor and outdoor, and is logically located in the center of town.

In 1959, the fire station was moved to 10th and Southwest Court, to better access the North Hill and the west end. This area is being built up, as more than 75 new commercial businesses, two new schools, a college with existing schools, eight apartment complexes and condos, a motel and a convention center. Seventy-five percent of the work force is in the west end, and the relocation of the fire station is 2 1/4 miles to the east of the present location. The old St. Anthony lot could be better used for a 100-unit apartment and condo complex, since Pendleton is short of housing.

The PGG building would be a much more suitable location.

Vote no on the bond measure for replacement of Fire Station 1.

Bob Byer
Pendleton

Moving chamber not in city’s best interest

I am very proud to be a resident of the city of Hermiston. When we moved to the city ten years ago, one of the things that impressed me was the forward thinking of the city leaders and the effort to make Hermiston a desirable place for new businesses to locate.

One of the key components in the forward movement of our city has been the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce.

The leadership of Debbie Pedro, her staff and the chamber board of directors has been a major catalyst in the development of this community and for new companies locating in the Hermiston area.

How is moving our chamber offices to a basement a step forward? Do we really want representatives from a corporation going to a basement office to meet with the director of our chamber? That is declaration to all newcomers the Chamber of Commerce is considered insignificant in the growth and development of our city.

Offering the basement offices of the old city library to the chamber is a clear message from the city manager, assistant city

manager, mayor and city council to the chamber of commerce just how insignificant they view the chamber’s role in our city.

The conference center was built through the generous donation of hundreds of thousands of dollars by the residents of this community. The city manager and council should remember that facility is there because the residents made it possible. They should be asking the citizens how they would like that facility to be used, not just by the executive decision that is being proposed. Please, clearly explain to the community how the chamber is losing money. The finance reports that have been given seem to show the funding from the hotel tax designated for their use has not been fully expended by them on any given year. This should be fully addressed at a public council meeting.

This is not in the best interest of our city. It is not forward thinking and is in fact a hindrance to the advancement of our city. The justification for such a move has been based upon some questionable facts that have the appearance of not providing accurate details of the actual financial base of the chamber.

F. Dean Hackett,
Hermiston

YOUR VIEWS