

OUR VIEW

Working together really does work

A collaborative plan to mentor youth locally not only creates opportunities now but sets the stage for success in the future

The program, the Columbia Summer Works Summer Internship Program, is a united effort between the Port of Morrow and Morrow County chambers of commerce and will be a nucleus for area business drawn to the idea of furnishing paid internships in business that run the gamut from digital media marketing to vector control.

The foundation of the idea is simple — attract young people into the area in the hope they will put down roots and contribute to the local economy and culture.

Investing in the future is, of course, a wise move. Our society is one that is in constant flux, and change — in status, jobs — is an American mainstay.

Why this idea makes such good sense, though, is because Eastern



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Brian Rust takes a sample from a grain truck as it dumps wheat at Morrow County Grain Growers' Hogue-Warner grain elevator in Irrigon on Tuesday afternoon. Morrow County Grain Growers is offering as many as seven intern positions through the new Morrow County internship program

Oregon has traditionally been an area that exports its youth and talent. Cities and growth areas in other parts of the state — and the nation — attract

talented young people.

This program, though, is one of those rare plans where area entities want to turn that old paradigm on its

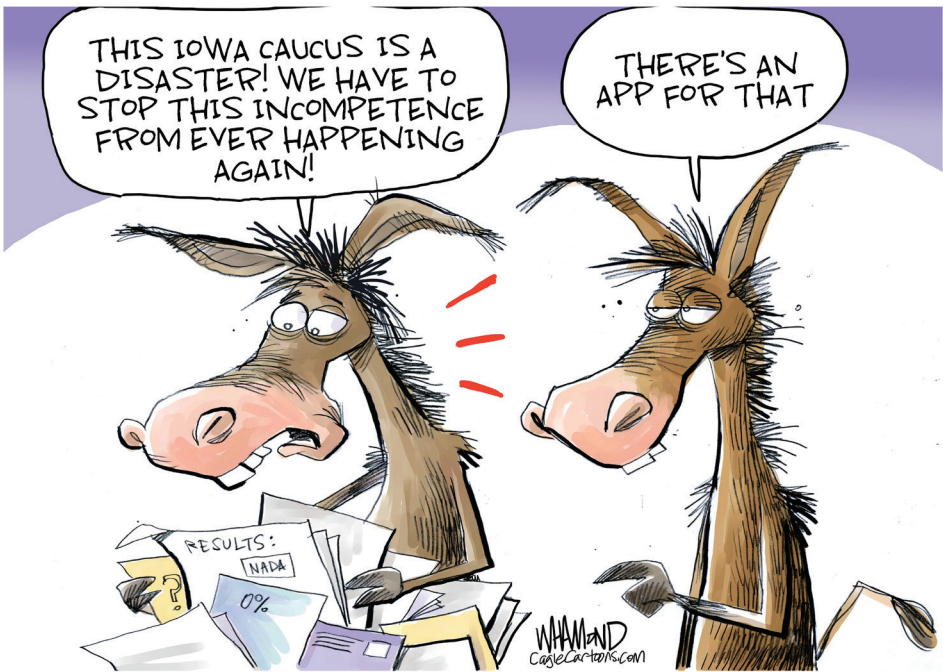
head and import talent and nourish it. The program also has as focus on mentoring and guiding homegrown talent.

All of this, of course, is aimed at setting our region up for success. Exporting our youth, transferring our talent to other parts of the state or the region or nation, means we will not be able to sustain ourselves, our way of life, in the future.

The more we can invest in the future with programs like the Columbia Summer Works Summer Internship Program, the more opportunities we will all have.

The other interesting item about the program is its collaborative nature. Instead of waiting around for someone to provide an answer, the entities involved in the program made a conscious effort to come together to find a solution.

Working together really does work. This program is a great example of that.



YOUR VIEWS

The First Amendment is alive and well in Eastern Oregon

Pendleton and Eastern Oregon should be extremely proud of the outstanding quality of its daily newspaper — the *East Oregonian*. While other newspapers suffer from reduced editorial staff, the *EO* has maintained its staff levels and provided quality coverage from Morrow to Umatilla counties and beyond.

There are no stronger reporters than the two senior members of the staff — Kathy Aney and Phil Wright, who is now leading *The Observer* in La Grande as its editor.

Keep up the great work, and I hope you'll join me in thanking everyone at the *EO* for keeping the First Amendment alive in the beautiful country of Eastern Oregon.

Skip Nichols
Walla Walla

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THIS LAND IS OUR LAND
Maintaining our treasured public lands

One sunny early spring day a few years ago, my wife, Kathy, and I broke our cabin fever by hopping on our mountain bikes and riding out into the desert of southeastern Oregon. I remember taking a rest break, lying in the sun on a sand dune and, seeing a passenger jet overhead, saying “Gee, the people in that airplane are probably the closest other humans to you and me right now.”

I realize now that we didn’t have a thought about whose land we were on as we pedaled on the two-tracked roads in the sunshine, because this was in the middle of 3 million acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management: land belonging to you, me and all American citizens.

Public lands have always been important to me. As a boy, I spent time most summers with my parents and grandparents in the Blues camping, fishing and exploring, and these experiences made a long-term impression on the towhead from Portland. My first job in the woods was with the Forest Service near Heppner, a job that caused me to change colleges and career paths, settle down and get serious about life. My career eventually included work in wildlife habitat management, forestry, fire management and administration, and through it all I treasured the presence of a green truck in the office parking lot that would take me to the woods as often as I could get away.

More than a few times in my career I was asked by a forest visitor, “Where am I allowed to go hiking on the National Forest?” While I was at first taken aback by this question, I eventually loved to quickly respond, with an expansive wave of my arm, “Anywhere you want.”

See, it’s easy to take for granted this treasure we call public lands. We are lucky to live in a time and place that gives us the ability to roam freely on lands belonging to all of us. National forests, rangelands and wildlife refuges are within just a few minutes’ drive of most of us in Northeast Oregon. Most people aren’t as blessed. I recently talked with a friend who grew up in Illinois, and his experiences were much different. In order for him to hunt or fish on public land, he needed to drive several hours, often only to find the small areas of public land crowded with others in the same pursuits.

We need to be careful to maintain this

treasure. There are some people who would like to see federal lands turned over to the states or to private ownership, and they sell their ideas by suggesting that this move would result in better management. History tells us a different story, however.

Removing land from federal management leads to privatization of these lands and loss of public access. As an example, when the western states were granted statehood by the federal government, they were also granted some federal lands for the support of public schools. The numbers differ from state to state, but in Oregon, of the 3.4 million acres granted to the state in 1859, only 776,000 acres remain in public hands; the rest has been sold into private ownership. In Nevada, only 3,000 acres of state lands are left of the 2.7 million acres that were granted to the

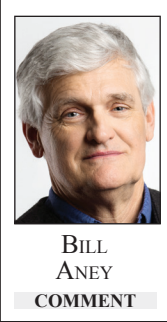
state.

This isn’t to say that we should be totally satisfied with the current condition of our federal lands or how they are managed. There are some really thorny dilemmas out there in our beloved Blues — how to work with the simultaneously restoring and destructive power of fire, how to perpetuate thriving wildlife populations in the face of conflicting economic and recreational values, how to reduce the impacts of humans on wildlife and wild places, how to generate economic value for local communities while maintaining the long-term productivity of these lands.

Thankfully, because these are public lands, we all have a voice about how we want these lands managed. Whether the interest is economic, spiritual or recreational, every user of public lands has the right and opportunity to speak about these values to the land managers. Try taking that approach with a mining company or corporate ranch.

Teddy Roosevelt said it well when he pointed out that most of the users of public lands aren’t even born yet. It is important to keep public lands in public hands so that future generations have the same (or better) opportunities to use, enjoy, and find spiritual restoration in these spaces.

Bill Aney is a forester and wildlife biologist living in Pendleton and loving the Blue Mountains.



BILL ANEY
COMMENT