

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Flooding brings out best, worst in people

Tough times bring out the best and worst in people.

Both have been on display this past week during the floods that have rocked much of Umatilla County.

A heavy snowstorm in the Blue Mountains last week, followed by two days of rain and warming temperatures, created the worst flooding in at least 30 years in the city of Pendleton and other smaller communities in the area. The Umatilla River crested at more than 19 feet on the night of Feb. 6 — nearly four times the average height for that date — during the worst of the flooding, and multiple rivers in the area set records for their water level.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown declared a state of emergency on Feb. 7 for Umatilla, Union, and Wallowa counties, which meant the Oregon National Guard could respond.

So, when trouble hit the county, when floodwater tore out roads and crept into houses, it is heartening to hear of the community swinging into action to help people through times of need.

More than 100 volunteers descended on the Riverside neighborhood on Sunday and Monday to assist residents in the cleanup of debris left behind by last week's flood, according to a tally kept by the city of Pendleton. The Salvation Army Pendleton assembled lunches to distribute to people working in the flood zone. Other businesses have rallied to the cause, providing money, food and resources to victims and first responders.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

City of Pendleton employee Darren Craven, center, assists volunteers David Welch, left, and Sam Jennings in emptying a trailer at a temporary dump site in the Riverside neighborhood on Sunday evening.

A hat tip, too, to United Way of the Blue Mountains. The organization has allocated \$20,000 to Walla Walla and Columbia counties and \$10,000 to Umatilla County to support recovery efforts. All additional donations earmarked for flood relief will be allocated to recovery efforts through a Disaster Fund, as will all proceeds from this year's Tastiest Taco contest.

Pacific Power donated \$5,000 to the Community Action Program of East Central Oregon to help the community recover and stay safe.

There are just a small sampling of the

outpouring of organizations and businesses that have chipped in to help during the flooding. Our hope is that the story of the Umatilla River flood will be remembered as one of camaraderie and community spirit, of the willingness of people to go the extra mile and to watch out for each other.

It was a disappointment, then, to hear some looters had chosen to use this horrific event as an opportunity to kick a family while they're down.

The Fuller family was forced from their Thorn Hollow home when waters surrounded their home last week. Nate

Fuller returned home Monday afternoon to assess and record the damage done to the foundation of their home when he noticed a door was ajar.

Things on the inside of the house seemed fine and nothing was obviously missing, when out of habit he looked out to where his goats and chickens were kept in his yard before the floods washed them away.

"That's when I saw tire marks in the mud where I knew I hadn't driven," he said.

Fuller could see where the vehicle had tried to drive off the property, but got stuck momentarily in the mud. He then found that his shed had been broken into and various tools, chain saws, paints and other items had been taken from it. In another shed, he found camping equipment and fishing rods had been stolen.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said so far there has been one report of a theft at Riverview Mobile Home Estates that is under investigation. Talk about a low blow. These are the only incidents that have been reported to this point, but, in our opinion, even one is too many. Our hope is that stepped-up patrols in the most impacted areas will provide the necessary deterrent. People shouldn't come home to find their property looted on top of flood damage.

Despite the bad apples in the bunch, there is some comfort in the fact the vast majority of Umatilla County is on the right side of the flood cleanup. We salute you.

OTHER VIEWS

History will remember Romney, not Collins

When future historians look for the last, documented instance of Republican political courage in the Trump imperium, they'll look to one man: Sen. Mitt Romney.

In one extraordinary speech on the floor of the United States Senate last Wednesday, the Utah senator made remarks that were both utterly moving in their absolute humanity and totally damning in their vivid rebuttal of GOP capitulation to a bankrupt White House.

"I swore an oath before God to exercise impartial justice," Romney told a nearly empty chamber around 2 p.m. on Feb. 5, two hours before the Senate voted to acquit President Donald Trump.

As *The Washington Post's* Dana Milbank wrote, Romney, fighting back tears, paused for some 12 seconds to collect himself before continuing.

"The grave question the Constitution tasks senators to answer is whether the president committed an act so extreme and egregious that it rises to the level of a high crime and misdemeanor. Yes, he did," Romney said, as the Senate gallery filled with journalists recording his remarks for the ages.

For me, the most profound part of Romney's speech was his reminder to his GOP colleagues of the responsibilities invested in them by the Constitution, the very responsibilities they so thoroughly abdicated during the Trump's fixed trial.

Dressed in a dark blue suit, white dress shirt, and blue tie, Romney, a devout Mormon and the GOP's 2012 presidential standard-bearer, looked like a throwback to a less complicated time — when there were politicians that most Americans would recognize as textbook Republican.

That matters because the Republican Party that Romney represented just eight years ago is dead and buried, never to return. If impeachment proved anything, it proved that the GOP is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the Trump Organization.

Romney's remarks were all the more striking when they're placed along the spineless surrender of fellow Republican Sens. Marco Rubio of Florida and Ted Cruz of

Texas, who were both viciously lashed by Trump in 2016, but who nonetheless fell into line and voted to acquit.

Maine Sen. Susan Collins, who plays a maverick on television and who voted in favor of calling witnesses, sided with her Republican colleagues on acquittal, even as she called Trump's behavior wrong.

It was the same kind of transactional and fleeting courage pioneered by former Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake, who made late-career fame out of publicly holding up the nomination of now-Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court, but who ultimately voted to confirm a flawed candidate.

Not Romney.

"I am aware that there are people in my party and in my state who will strenuously disapprove of my decision, and in some quarters, I will be vehemently denounced," he said. "I am sure to hear abuse from the President and his supporters. Does anyone seriously believe I would consent to these consequences other than from an inescapable conviction that my oath before God demanded it of me?"

I recently compared the current U.S. Senate to the weak-willed Roman Senate of antiquity that caved to the excesses of the most tyrannical emperors out of sheer self-interest.

History also remembers that the Emperor Nero ordered Seneca, his onetime counselor, to commit suicide when he fell out of favor. Romney might well have committed political suicide. And it was equally clear that, like Seneca, there were principles more important to Romney than mere self-preservation.

"With my vote, I will tell my children and their children that I did my duty to the best of my ability, believing that my country expected it of me," he said adding, "... we're all footnotes at best in the annals of history. But in the most powerful nation on earth, the nation conceived in liberty and justice, that is distinction enough for any citizen."

In this diminished time, it's more than enough.

John L. Micek is a syndicated columnist.



YOUR VIEWS

What should be done about climate change?

What actions do Sen. Bill Hansell and Rep. Greg Barreto think should be taken, either in the state Legislature or by vote of Oregon electors, to slow the human contribution to rapid climate change? I believe they both acknowledge that climate change is real and that human activity is making significant contributions to it.

They must recognize that the effects of climate change are all around us: increased flooding; larger and more frequent wildfires; hotter summers and shifting rain/snow patterns. They see the negative impacts those changes are having on agriculture and on Eastern Oregon communities.

Surely they recognize that something must be done, now. They have told us in considerable detail why they think the current draft legislation is not effective, will damage or eliminate the livelihoods of many of us, shouldn't be offered now. But what do they think should be done?

We need our state legislators to lead! We need them to help us be part of the solution!

Lindsay Winsor
Milton-Freewater

Looking for leadership

Only one question: Where is the governor?

Rodney Thompson
Pendleton

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