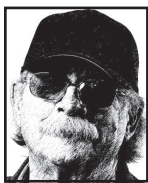


# To buy or not to buy



J.D.  
SMITH

FROM THE HEADWATERS  
OF DRY CREEK

Once upon a time, way too long ago, we Clifton/Smiths and a dog with no surname loaded into a Subaru with a hillock of sleeping bags, pads, books, salami, generic kibble, two huckleberry pies, and a change of clothing each. Underneath were a Dremel tool with a chewcanful of router bits and a belt sander. We were headed to Boise to attend the annual Power-tool Pumpkin Carving Gala and Belt Sander Drag Races.

America had more in store for us than making merry. When we were a coffee addict's full bladder away from home, in this case Baker City, we pulled off Interstate 84 into a clean junk food emporium where I was blown away to discover, piled at the entrance, a half-cord of punky lodgepole firewood, plastic-bundled in armload quantities, \$5 each and clearly labeled "Made in Canada."

I almost choked on my corndog.

The local firewood gypsies, those independents who herd rattletrap pickups with 5-foot racks over goat trails while hauling two cords of red fir and tamarack, were being strangled by international corporate

greed. Call me protectionist, reactionary, communist, I don't care. It just seems that something is stinky wrong with the holy economy when an American chain store gas station is selling bad Canadian firewood five minutes away from a national forest.

I was still mumbling in my mustache about unbridled capitalism as we passed the Ore-Ida Tater Tot factory in Ontario, blowing greasy steamrings into the sky, then crossed over the Snake River into Idaho. An hour later, I was chillin' on a couch in the north end of Boise.

The party format was Idaho standard: play hard, play safe, nobody hurt. Outside the back door of a cozy home in the Boise foothills were 20 pumpkins, two sets of large construction flood lights, a large potting shed table, a 50-gallon garbage bucket, enough power tools to build a piano and the sander drag strip, two lanes, 16 feet long.

Inside the house were a round oak table filled with potluck fortunes including individual cream puffs, a vat of home-brewed chili, and a cabinet filled with hangovers including three bottles of Russian vodka. Standing there, I realized that there may be a flaw in my political thinking because it didn't bother me that Russians peddle vodka in a state best known for growing its prime ingredient.

The pumpkin mangling was an exercise in young people's encounter with power tools. Most mutilators had the same vision,

a Jack-o-Lantern with triangle eyes and snaggletooth grin. But the lure of operating the tool overcame the desire for a perfect product. I watched a 6-year-old girl, with a cordless drill and quarter-inch spade bit, punch maybe 800 holes into Jack's head, giggling all the while. I roughed out a regular Halloween head with a jigsaw, then tattooed it with a rotary tool.

The belt sander drags were rigged. I was running a stock Sears 4x24 with 80 grit paper. On my first trial of Ol' Dusty, she flipped sideways, her switch shorted, and she went up in sparks with that electrical odor. The trophy winner was owned by the person who had constructed the track, an aircraft mechanic, who modified a 3-inch sander to include two side wheels that made it run straight and true between the rails that divided lanes. The winning elapsed time in this year's drags was just under one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, for 16 feet. Don't try this on you mother's Persian carpet.

The next morning my son had money burning a hole in his pocket so we went across Boise to a mega-electronics box store. While he scratched his mop about letting go of cash for this or that peripheral for his gaming computer, I entered the Temple of Refrigeration, where I encountered yet another indicator that something's fishy in modern Consumeria.

There I viewed the Holy Grail of refrig-

erators. For a mere \$4,200 one can purchase a brushed aluminum, side-by-side refrigerator/freezer with ice water dispenser and, I kid you not, built into the refrigerator door, a 24-inch flat panel television screen.

I stood in puzzled rapture. Some folks have a small TV set in the kitchen, a replacement for the countertop radios of old, meant to deliver propaganda over one's morning cup or let one stay current with Don Knotts while cooking the grits. But for whom was this product designed? Is there someone out there, with a kitchen big enough, who actually wants to stare at a whole herking refrigerator while investigating the effects of wave action on swimwear during an episode of "Baywatch"? I was too dumbfounded to get the brand name on this beast, but if you have a very large unfilled niche in your gadget collection, you can get together with one of these babies in several box stores.

Luckily, my space limitation in this paper prohibits a full rant about what unbridled consumerism is doing to our planet. Just one small last example, though, in closing. On that same afternoon, in the pet food aisle of a store once heralded for its supply of natural bulk foods, I found on the top shelf, at two bucks per 16-ounce bottle, three products labeled Chicken Flavored Water, Beef Flavored Water, and Bacon Flavored Water.

*J.D. Smith is an accomplished writer and jack-of-all-trades. He lives in Athena.*

## We all have responsibilities to future generations



JEFF  
BLACKWOOD

UNDERSTANDING OUR  
CHANGING CLIMATE

As our climate continues to change, we are all feeling the impacts ranging from longer, drier summers to public health issues. These impacts will affect us all no matter our political persuasions or social well-being.

A statewide poll published this fall in the *East Oregonian* revealed a majority of Oregonians believe the climate is changing, although what to do about it is still up for debate. While the debate continues, research and experiences are helping us understand and adapt to our changing environment. By approaching this with our eyes wide open, we can all do our

part while building a sustainable future.

Here locally, we are seeing longer, drier summers extending well into the fall. Although climate change is not the only reason for recent large wildfires, it certainly contributes to their intensities and length of wildfire seasons.

Through interagency water monitoring, we are seeing spring water runoff from snowmelt in the mountains earlier than in the past. Climate scientists predict more rain-on-snow events in the future as we experienced in February 2020, contributing to downstream flooding. This also is disrupting fish spawning cycles and other aquatic life.

Invasive plants, such as yellow star thistle, Russian thistle and knapweed, are ever increasing, outstripping county, tribal, and landowners' abilities to sustain healthy rangelands and wildlife habitat.

To many, climate change has become a gloom and doom story, leading to anger,

despair and resignation. We can overcome this by meeting the challenge head-on armed with sound scientific knowledge and commitment. COVID-19 has dominated our lives lately and enormous investments in resources and sacrifices have been made. By applying the same energy to climate change solutions, we can survive this too.

Since the sources of greenhouse gases are many, the solutions should be the same. There is no silver bullet — no one correct answer. We all have a stake in this, as well as responsibilities to future generations.

Over the past several years, the Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition has sponsored and facilitated a number of community presentations and discussions regarding our changing climate. EOC3 is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization open to anyone.

We are dedicated to providing science-based information on climate change to our communities. This knowledge will help

support informed decisions, policies, and strategies as we move to the future. In addition to periodic community forums and monthly "climate conversations," EOC3 plans to facilitate the submission of periodic articles to the *EO* that may be of interest to our communities from regional experts covering a wide variety of climate change impacts as well as ideas for addressing these.

EOC3 intends to share what we are seeing, what we might expect, and ideas for adaptation, mitigation, and solutions. It is all about the future for our communities, region and planet.

If interested in joining the EOC3 mailing list for periodic references and notifications, please contact [eastoregonclimatechange@gmail.com](mailto:eastoregonclimatechange@gmail.com).

*Jeff Blackwood spent his career with the US Forest Service and is a member of Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition.*

## Letter critiques points of BLM proposal



GEORGE  
WUERTHNER

OTHER VIEWS

To read the letter  
The scientists' letter can be found here: <https://onda.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Scientist-Letter-Tri-State-Fuels-Project-12-18-20.pdf>

Recently, eight prominent scientists sent a letter to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) declaring that the agency's proposed Tri-State Fuel Break (TSFB) for Oregon, Nevada, and Idaho is flawed and will endanger sagebrush ecosystems.

To quote the scientists: "If implemented as proposed (and as already approved in the Idaho-side Record of Decision), the project will likely degrade the biological diversity and ecosystem services provided by these landscapes."

The BLM's proposes creating up to 1,539 miles of fuel breaks (enough to travel half-way across the United States). Fuel breaks by mowing, mowing and seeding, seeding within the fuel treatment zone, and blading, hand cutting, or herbicide application to remove vegetation within the existing roadbed. Besides, the BLM plans to use "targeted grazing" to reduce fuels further.

The scientists contend the BLM's proposal will likely fail to contain large fires, and the collateral damage will result in: "(1) fragment large areas of intact sagebrush ecosystems; (2) facilitate the invasion of exotics due to the disturbance created by the breaks; (3) supplant native communities with exotic dominants; and (4) destroy or degrade biological soil crusts and any native species in the sites."

The other problem noted by the scientists is the BLM's failure to acknowledge that climate/weather is the fundamental force driving large blazes. Under extreme fire conditions of high winds, high temperatures, and low fuel moisture, fuel breaks are ineffective.

The scientists noted the BLM failed to consider the effect of livestock grazing in the deterioration of the West's sagebrush ecosystems.

To quote from their letter: "The E.I.S. does not address the ultimate and only controllable cause of the degradation of the biodiversity of the Sagebrush steppe — livestock grazing."

The letter goes on to critique four main points of the BLM's proposal.

The first is that there is little evidence that fuel breaks can preclude the spread of large fires under extreme fire weather conditions. While fuel breaks are likely ineffective for preventing fire spread, they create edge effects and fragment sagebrush

habitat. They often serve as a vector for the movement of exotic plants (cheatgrass) and wildlife.

One consequential disruption caused by fuel breaks construction is the destruction of biocrusts. Biocrusts cover the soil surface between native bunchgrasses. They not only add nitrogen to the soil, but they also help to inhibit the establishment of cheatgrass and other non-native species.

Ironically, one of the justifications for the fuel break treatments and targeted grazing is to save sage grouse habitat.

The scientists noted that "extreme soil trampling and overuse of the native grasses and forbs (occurs) before cattle would begin to graze the less palatable exotic grasses and shrubs. This overuse/overgrazing of the native species would be deleterious to other resource values such as Greater sage-grouse habitat."

The scientists also note that climate change and the resulting extreme fire weather are primarily responsible for the larger blazes occurring in sagebrush ecosystems. And they chastise the BLM for its failure to do anything about livestock grazing when GHG emissions from livestock are among the factors contributing to climate warming.

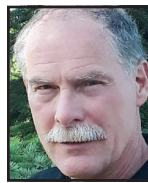
The scientists also disparaged the BLM's happy talk about proper livestock management. The FEIS repeatedly states that grazing "is managed to meet" land health standards, and improvements are predicated on grazing to be conducted properly. However, the scientists noted that in Southeast Oregon, as an example, over 75% of the allotments currently do not meet standards.

While the BLM recognizes the spread of cheatgrass is an ongoing threat to sagebrush ecosystems, they do nothing to reduce the leading cause of cheatgrass colonization — livestock grazing.

The scientists conclude their letter and analysis by arguing if the BLM is genuinely interested in restoring sagebrush ecosystems, then "passive restoration, achieved by reducing cumulative cattle grazing impacts is the most effective means of achieving these goals."

*George Wuerthner is an ecologist who specializes in fire ecology and livestock issues.*

## A healthy start to the new year



JOHN  
WINTERS

HEALTH ESSENTIALS

The new year is a good time to reevaluate our values and consider our priorities to improve our health and well-being. It is said you are doing well if indeed, you actually make one or two significant changes in a year. Losing weight is a common, notoriously difficult challenge.

While excess weight undoubtedly

affects health in many ways, it is important to realize that the reverse is also true.

Your physical, mental and emotional health all affect your weight. Perhaps it would be wise to consider taking the laser focus off of "losing weight" and focus on "getting healthier" instead?

Being skinny doesn't necessarily mean you are healthy. Let's shine the light on increasing vibrant health and let the weight take care of itself. Here are a few ideas that may help.

"Intermittent eating" improves health at the cellular level. Nutrition experts actually call this "intermittent fasting," but I would rather eat than fast! I admit, with some chagrin, that in spite of my education on the benefits of fasting, I only last a day or two. Intermittent eating offers many of fasting's benefits in a kinder, gentler way. The easiest way to do this is to eat food most days in an 8-hour window, leaving 16 hours for rest and recovery. I try not to eat late at night or early in the morning anyway, because this is hard on the gut. So, dinner at 6 p.m. and a light breakfast at 10 a.m. allows for a 16-hour "fast." While it might feel like cheating, you actually get important benefits.

One in eight Americans is metabolically healthy. Few of us have ideal levels of blood sugar, triglycerides, cholesterol, blood pressure or waist circumference — without relying on pharmaceuticals. We Americans are on average overfed and undernourished. This leads to poor health and poor quality of life. Taking a mini-break from eating can correct these problems. Our ancestors didn't have unlimited access to food as we do, so the human body has a built in master switch for lean times.

This metabolic master switch determines if our 50 trillion cells are busy "producing" or busy "recovering." A balance of both is important.

Digesting food takes work; too much work leads to fatigue, diabetes, obesity and many other chronic problems. Not eating frees the cleaning crew to break down older, worn, less vital parts and recycle them. Resting allows the cells to rejuvenate and repair, to remove the sludge, if you will. Imagine your car repairing and rebuilding itself while sitting in the garage overnight.

A 16-hour pause in eating trains your body to dig deeper for energy. Dinner at

6 p.m. and breakfast at 10 a.m. the following morning is one way to do this. This short rest burns fat and improves your metabolic health in myriad ways. The resultant metabolic changes improve blood levels of cholesterol, sugar, triglycerides and insulin. Growth hormone levels

skyrocket, inflammation is reduced and the stress response, cognition, endurance and hormone balance are all improved. Losing body fat is merely icing on the ... um, broccoli. All these improvements help you look better, feel better and function better.

The point is, when you eat can be as important as what you eat. Indigestion, heartburn, and numerous digestive ailments arise with ill-timed noshing. Eat when you are relaxed, as this is when your digestive system works best. Eating too early or too late in the day forces the gut to work when it would rather be resting. Avoid meals within two hours of going to bed. Eat a light or delayed breakfast.

The body has two modes of operation: go/do/think, or rest/relax/recover. The former turns off the gut and the latter turns it on. When you are stressed, blood is sent to the muscles and brain. When relaxed, blood goes to the gut to absorb nutrients and aid digestion. A hurried meal consumed on the way to work isn't optimal, and may in fact cause more harm than good. Make it a point to eat when you are relaxed and can enjoy your food.

I hope these few suggestions are helpful as we move into a new year in a positive way, where anything is possible.

*John Winters is a naturopathic physician, who recently retired after operating a practice in La Grande since 1992.*

**"INTERMITTENT  
EATING OFFERS  
MANY OF FASTING'S  
BENEFITS IN A  
KINDER, GENTLER  
WAY."**