

OUR VIEW

New river protections may have unintended consequences

Oregon lawmakers at the state and national level do far more work regarding unintended consequences when they craft new legislation.

That isn't an easy task, especially when a politician is trying to get reelected, salve the often-sharp political edges of his constituents, or is besieged by special interest groups.

Yet, it is a real issue that typically goes unnoticed until a piece of legislation becomes law. Then, the unintended consequences are obvious and a whole new set of problems exist.

A good case in point is a recent proposal by Democratic Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley to add more than 4,000 miles of Oregon rivers and streams to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system.

The bill is set to greatly expand the amount of terrain protected from a quarter-mile strip on each side of a specific river to one-half mile.

At first glance there is something in the bill for everyone. The fears of environmentalists are assuaged, hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts will see their favorite pristine piece of land near a river safeguarded, and it's a giant step forward in terms of conservation.

A lingering question, though, should be, "What would be the unintended consequences to this legislation?" If you are an environmentalist, the answer would be none. However, if you are not firmly rooted in the conservation camp, what does such a bill really mean?

Wyden said in a press release regarding the bill that Oregonians made it "loud and clear: They cherish Oregon's rivers and want them protected for generations to come."

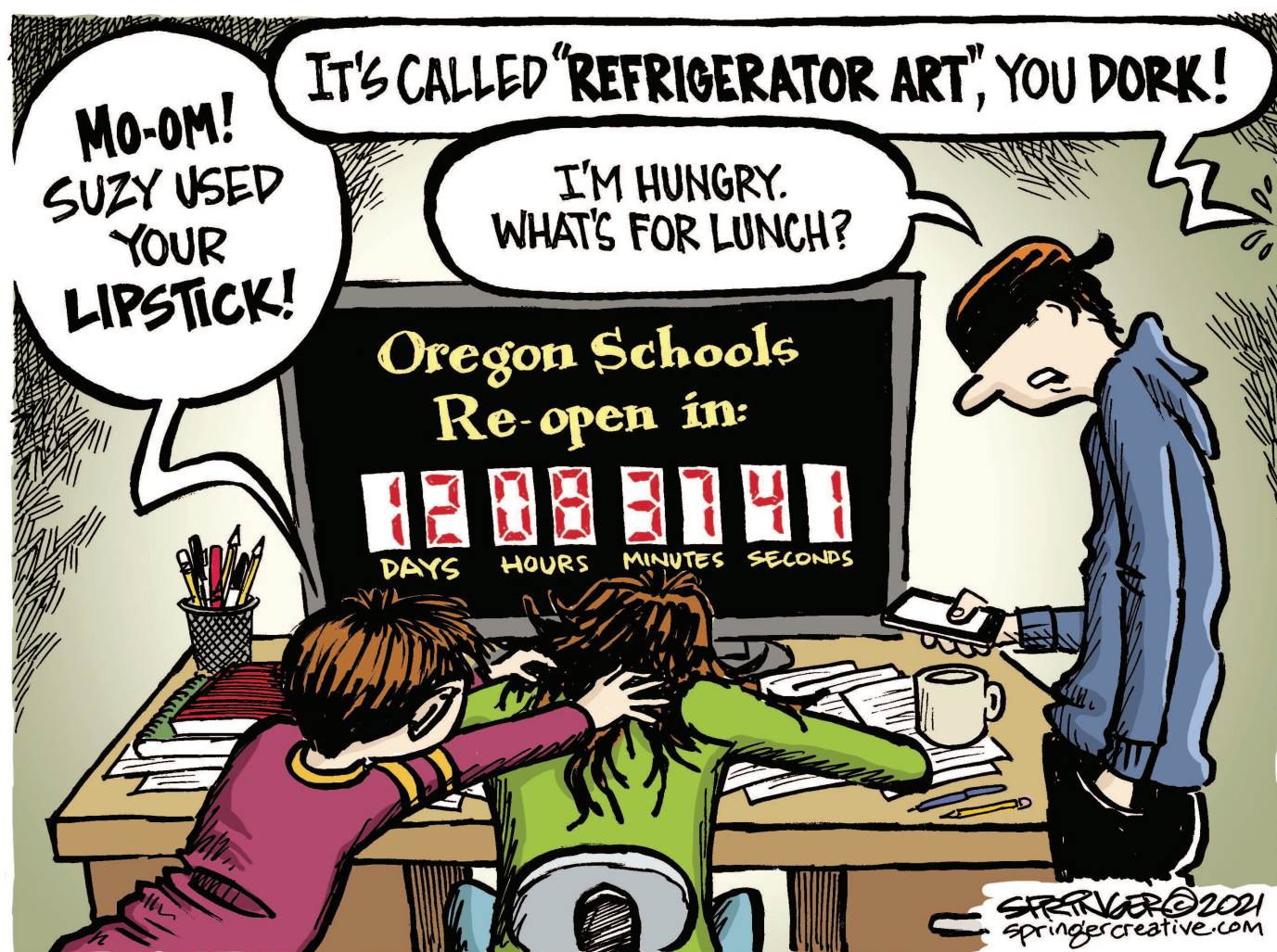
Wyden is probably correct. Generally, most people want to see our rivers and mountains protected from damage, not only now but for future generations.

Still, what Oregonians made it "loud and clear?" Umatilla County? Morrow County? Folks in Union County? If so, how many?

Let's be clear. We are not in opposition to the bill. What we do hope is the lawmakers who have carefully — we hope — crafted the legislation have thought the idea all the way to the end.

Making wide-sweeping proclamations to appease conservation groups is all well and good, but the impact of the legislation to the folks on the ground should be a key question with a readily available answer.

Too often lawmakers develop a grand idea that sounds great. On paper it makes everyone happy. Then it becomes law and someone, somewhere, loses. We think Wyden's and Merkley's legislation is too important to fall into the category of unintended consequences.



Tending the flock through life's storms



REGINA BRAKER
ANOTHER MILE

When I visited my friend Marie's farm last month, the alpaca, cattle, sheep and horses were in their usual routines, in the field or barn. But the work of tending to the flock (chickens too) recently brought a new level of physical exertion by several notches because of a blanket of snow thicker than many in our region could remember.

And when on a slow road to recovery from COVID-19, as Marie's husband is, who continues to make his way back to his job and daily tasks at home on the farm, the impact of a polar vortex snowstorm was an added insult to injury, though his blog about their farm didn't suggest it.

That lines up with Marie's persistence in becoming a priest in her church and tender of a different kind of flock, her long journey filled with detours and obstacles along the way. Yet, each experience brought something important to enrich her capabilities in her calling, whether in pastoral care, engaging her students as a professor, or with those with whom she interacts as a farmer.

Marie was born in Pendleton to parents farming land her family has lived on since 1904. She knows her husband from her high school days, and they reconnected after time away at college studying applied mathematics and chem-

ical engineering for her, and a stint in the Navy for him. Those years as young adults had them working in Idaho, having a daughter and finding that work leads to a quest for more education, until circumstances at the family farm brought new responsibilities.

A Thanksgiving one year confronted them with the realization that they were needed at home. Many conversations later, the upshot was, as Marie told me, "We moved home ... began extensive renovation and restoration ... slowly reclaiming the farmland from thistles and growing our menagerie."

They moved into the old farmhouse there, also in need of loving care.

Marie's early life informed this move back to a place she knew from age 12, where her adolescence included learning to cook and sew, as well as show and sell sheep through 4-H. Life was frugal, with childhood clothing made by her mother, meals at restaurants a rarity, attending a movie a special family treat once or twice a year. Still, life was good, with travel by pony to visit both sets of grandparents in Pilot Rock, who participated in her life into adulthood.

"Mom and Dad always made sure we knew that all people were to be treated with dignity and respect," Marie shared. "That expectation was so deeply engrained in me that I had no real understanding that behaving otherwise was even an option. Anyone who came to the house was fed. Tithing was expected. Supporting church, community and family was just how life was lived."

And yet, there were experiences that were not supportive: an employment situ-

ation that challenged Marie's personal integrity and led her to begin graduate studies with an eye toward college-level teaching, and the priest who opposed her call to ministry.

Active in her church throughout her youth, with a role reading scripture, serving communion and leading morning prayer when needed, Marie was heading toward her vocation.

"I was extinguishing candles after the service, still in my acolyte attire, and the then-priest of our congregation said to me, 'This is unusual for me, but I feel compelled to tell you that I would be honored to one day be present at your ordination,'" she said.

Age 17 then, and aware of her inadequacy to answer the call at that time, Marie says "that comment planted the seed." Over many years she was committed to her goal, through life events, employment shifts, during graduate studies and even when displaced by the needs of her parents. Marie's detour through disappointments developed skills she would need in her ministry, and her words offer us wisdom for our lives today.

"I've become much better at reading people ... with a much deeper compassion for folks who find themselves in circumstances they never imagined would be theirs. ... It brought so much growth, insight and compassion into how I view the world and the people I encounter," she said.

Regina Braker, a retired educator with journeys through many places and experiences, enjoys getting to know people along the way.

YOUR VIEWS

Increasing river protection is unwarranted

If the River Democracy Act passes, 4,700 river miles in Oregon will be included in the wild and scenic designation. Considered a "remarkable achievement" by some, others see a monster land grab, a back door to more lock up and lock out.

Increasing the buffer zone from one-quarter to one-half mile on both sides of the rivers creates approximately 3 million acres of de facto wilderness. Baker, Union, Wallowa and Grant counties will be saddled with 700 miles, Wallowa County alone will add 440 miles.

Management plans will be developed by the U.S. Forest Service or other agency. Presently the Forest Service is way over its head in managing the forest, so maybe the other agency that is referred to in the Feb. 13 article in the *Baker City Herald* can take on the chore.

Unsettling, upsetting, disturbing — this is happening under the term democracy. How and when did we lose control to a room full of politicians in Washington, D.C.? Have we become so complacent that this is acceptable? Ignoring impacts and input at the local level has

become standard operating procedure. Lack of coordination with the counties circumvents local input (coordination is the law). Failure to recognize local concerns was the primary factor in the Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision withdrawal. "Ditto," trying it again.

No one cares more for our public lands and waterways than the residents of Eastern Oregon. Federal and state agencies use many tools to protect and preserve special places. Additional restrictions, outside those presently available, are unwarranted.

We're urging the Eastern Oregon Counties Association to join in and support Baker County's opposition to the River Democracy Act.

D.M. (Tork) and Wanda Ballard
Baker City

'Ethnomathematics' an attempt to dismantle racism

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is now "trying to undo racism in mathematics" by providing training for "ethnomathematics" because, among other things, white supremacy manifests itself in the focus

on finding the right answer.

In promoting the "Pathway to Math Equity Micro-Course," the ODE states that "white supremacy culture" allegedly "infiltrates math classrooms" and goes so far as to contend there shouldn't be wrong or right answers — or that students "show their work."

In other words, 2 plus 2 shouldn't equal 4. It instructs teachers of our children to "identify and challenge the ways that math is used to uphold capitalist, imperialist and racist views."

Makes sense, right? We don't want people to think and calculate with precision — a habit that might make for a better, safer world for everyone. After all, their logic holds, we shouldn't have accurate calculations for things like the construction of buildings and roads, bank accounts, budgets, medical procedures or whatnot; that's "systematically racist" and "inequitable."

In any event, most of the numbers I've calculated over my years have been black (or red). I'd say the evidence is overwhelming that white numbers are underrepresented and marginalized in the field. And I feel the pain they suffer.

Keith Gallagher
Condon

EDITORIALS

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

LETTERS

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

SEND LETTERS TO:

editor@eastoregonian.com,
or via mail to Andrew Cutler,
211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801