



ANDREW
CLARK
A SLICE OF LIFE

We have responsibility for one another

We are in a very sad period here in Eastern Oregon. We have a vicious human disease circulating that is getting worse as the more virulent and/or transmissible variants evolve.

We have a stunningly low rate of use of the most basic tool for disease control — vaccination — so the probability of the epidemic being perpetuated and continuing to evolve into worsening forms and causing more sickness and death is increasing day by day. In Umatilla County, the vaccination rate as of Thursday is 35.1%, so about two-thirds of the people we meet are not protected and are potential carriers of COVID-19 and potential dangers to everyone with whom they associate. Additionally, our case numbers are rising.

What has happened to us as a culture? Where has the idea of mutual cooperation for problem solving gone? What has happened to our sense of community responsibility? How has it come to be that we do not care enough for each other that almost two-thirds of us ignore the concept of the basic common sense to protect ourselves from a potentially lethal disease and the common courtesy to assure others that we will protect them from us if we are infected?

I am a veterinarian. I've been the state veterinarian of Oregon, and the regulatory work done by that office is the animal equivalent of Public Health for the human side of the health equation. I know from experience that a lot of people do not appreciate being "regulated" and consider the statutes and rules about health for both humans and/or livestock to be either unnecessary or too restrictive. But as the state vet, and working with livestock owners and ranchers all over the state, when the reasons for the regulations were clearly explained and they understood the "whys," they cooperated. On the human side, the "whys" have been clearly explained and the reasons are good. So what has happened?

We are tremendously fortunate to have access to excellent public health and to well proven, safe and effective disease prevention tools and control strategies. But if we do not use them, the disease wins. We have immediate access to the three most basic control methods — prevention of airborne virus by use of masks, prevention of contact by use of social distancing and prevention of infection by use of vaccination.

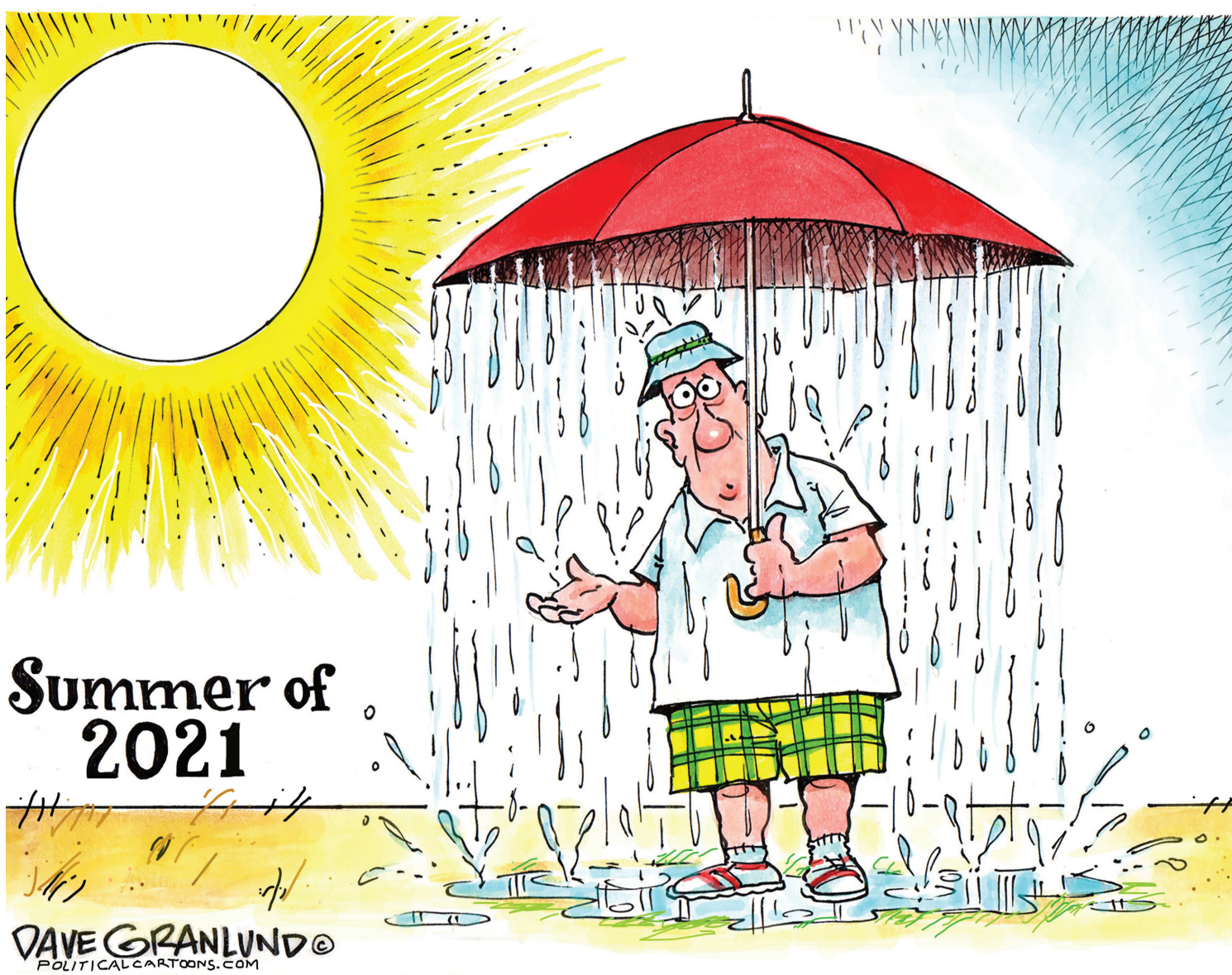
And now, the most vulnerable group is our children — and grandchildren — for whose health, welfare and future is our responsibility. This is a serious situation, and vaccination for them is currently not available. The only avenue to protect them from infection and terrible debilitation is to prevent infection in ourselves, and isn't that a rather serious responsibility that all of us really need to accept? The kids have no choice. We adults do.

Please, friends — let's not make our wonderful and beloved Eastern Oregon a dangerous place to live. Please use the tools we have for prevention and control. Please do not jeopardize our children. The vaccines are safe to use and efficacious — they are proven to be safe and to work well. The side effects for millions and millions of people have been negligible — maybe a tiny bit of soreness at the vaccination site.

We have responsibility for one another. We need to protect ourselves and to protect each other. We need to cooperate together as an entire American culture and community to eliminate this terrible disease and terminate the pandemic — and it takes each and every one of us to accomplish that goal.

And we need to ensure that our lovely place to live here in Eastern Oregon is a place of safety and peace.

Dr. Andrew Clark is a livestock veterinarian with both domestic and international work experience who lives in Pendleton.



Oregon 'Wild & Scenic' expansion raises land management concerns



NICK
SMITH
OTHER VIEWS

Anyone who works the land should be wary of proposed legislation that applies federal Wild & Scenic River designations to 4,700 miles of Oregon rivers, streams, creeks, gulches, draws and unnamed tributaries. The bill, proposed by Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley and promoted by environmental groups, has already received a committee hearing in the U.S. Senate, the first step toward passage.

S. 192, also known as the "River Democracy Act," would apply half-mile buffer restrictions to proposed segments. If approved, it could impact public access, water resource management, forest and vegetation management, ranching and grazing, mining and other uses on an estimated 3 million acres of public lands — a land mass nearly twice the size of the state of Delaware.

Currently there are over 2,000 miles of Oregon rivers designated as Wild & Scenic. The Wild & Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 was intended to protect rivers with "outstanding natural, cultural and recreational values in a free-flowing condition."

Yet S. 192 only classifies 15% of the proposed segments as rivers. The bill identifies hundreds of streams, creeks, draws, gulches and unnamed tributaries for Wild

& Scenic designations, even though many do not even carry water year-round.

S. 192 violates the spirit of the 1968 law because it bypasses a mechanism for robust study and review of proposed waterways to immediately add an additional 4,700 miles to the Wild & Scenic Rivers system. If such studies were conducted, many areas included in S. 192 would likely be found ineligible or unsuitable for designation.

Considering past use and litigation of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, the bill raises a lot of questions about how it will impact future access, private property and water rights and other traditional uses of both public and private land.

Arbitrary land designations can have a chilling effect on actions taken by federal land management agencies, including actions intended to improve the land. For example, a Wild & Scenic designation could discourage efforts to stabilize riverbanks to avoid losing farm and range land to erosion. That's because federal courts have consistently upheld legal challenges by environmentalist groups against land management activities based on these designations.

For those of us concerned about severe wildfires, we are especially troubled with how S. 192 would affect fuels reduction efforts on federal lands. Nearly half a million acres of federally managed forest land burned in Western Oregon in 2020. Approximately 280,000 acres burned at moderate and high severity, meaning at least 60% of a stand's live trees were killed in a fire.

We are already frustrated with the slow pace of forest management and fuels reduction work on federal lands. Adding new restrictions and bureaucracy on 3 million acres of these lands will not repair an already broken system. Despite claims made by proponents, S. 192 does not support wildfire mitigation.

Nothing in the bill directs or authorizes federal agencies to utilize all available land management tools — including mechanical treatments — to reduce the risk of severe wildfires, nor does it explicitly permit post-fire restoration work, such as the removal of dead and dying trees, to maintain public access.

Rather, the bill only allows agencies to consider prescribed fire, even though fire alone will not address heavy and unnatural fuel loads on already fire-prone landscapes.

As Oregon experiences another devastating wildfire season, this is the wrong time to add more layers of restrictions and bureaucracy on the management of public lands. Anyone with private lands near these proposed Wild & Scenic segments see how it affects them.

Nick Smith is director of public affairs for the American Forest Resource Council, a regional trade association representing the forest products sector. He also is executive director of Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities, a nonpartisan grassroots coalition that advocates for active management of America's federally owned forests.

Why we support keeping the Snake River dams



JEFF
VAN PEVENAGE
OTHER VIEWS

We add our voice to those who support maintaining the lower Snake River dams.

Here at Columbia Grain International, we have been supplying the world with grain, pulses, edible beans and oilseeds for over four decades. Our supply chain stretches across the northern tier of the United States from North Dakota to Washington, cultivating the growth of our farmers' crops to safely nourish the world.

We operate nine grain elevators in Eastern Washington, own or participate in loading grain at three lower Snake River terminals, and are the majority owner in two export terminals in the Columbia River District. It's an understatement to say that we have a vested interest in this topic.

Removing the lower Snake River dams as part of Idaho Rep. Mike Simpson's \$33.5 billion framework doesn't promise to bring back Idaho's salmon, but it will have devastating effects on our farmers who rely on this river system to successfully transport their crops to key export terminals to supply the international markets.

The Columbia River System is the nation's single largest wheat export gateway, transporting 50% of all U.S. wheat to markets overseas. The Northwest Infrastructure Proposal will slow international trade, including the distribution of wheat, soy, corn, wood, automobiles, mineral bulks and cruise tourism, and has the potential to eradicate the 40,000 local jobs that are dependent on this trade.

For us, it will endanger the economic viability of at least two Portland-based export terminals, which rely heavily on barges and don't have the land footprint to expand rail placement capacity.

The removal of the dams will cause transportation methods to shift toward truck and rail, creating greater instability in freight costs, and exposing farmers to potentially higher transportation costs for grain shipments to destination markets, particularly during the fall when corn and soybean shipments from the Midwest are heavy.

Although small compared to the giant Columbia Basin Project upriver on the mainstem Columbia, the lower Snake River also plays an important irrigation role, watering over 60,000 acres of farmland in central and southeastern Washington that produce dozens of different varieties of fruits, vegetables and grains.

The evidence is clear. If the dams are breached, our farmers will be paying more and making less at the end of the day.

For over 40 years, the Columbia Snake River System has successfully served our communities, providing our regions with clean power, jobs, efficient transportation, irrigation, flood control and more. It is critical now more than ever to keep this region stable and competitive in a time of global economic and social uncertainties. We are committed to cultivating the continued growth of our farmers and our Pacific Northwest communities, and have serious doubts about the inherent cons, which we feel drastically outweigh the pros of this proposal.

Proponents of the proposal argue that removing the dams is necessary to restore salmon population. However, studies show that salmon survival rates may be greater now than if no dams existed. This all goes

back to the life cycle of fish and the fact that they spend most of their lives in the ocean. As we learn more about ocean conditions from NOAA Fisheries, West Coast wild salmon and steelhead runs are struggling, and the commonality is the ocean.

When considering dam removal, I've studied the statistics that came from 40 years of research by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bonneville Power Administration, and were compiled by retired Fish and Wildlife biologist John McKern. McKern spent much of his 30-year career researching fish survival and developing and implementing fish passage improvements at the Snake and Columbia river dams. He found that after the fish leave the Columbia River, about 88% of the remaining fish die during their first two or three years in the ocean from predators, adverse ocean conditions and commercial fishing.

The Frazier River in Canada is very similar to the Columbia River system. It and other rivers along the West Coast of the U.S. and Canada have no dams and have the same fish problems as the Columbia River system.

Currently, we have done quite well stewarding fish and protecting them every step of the way as they move and make their journey on the river. Removing the dams will have grave implications for our vital farm communities that depend on this transportation system to feed the world. We hope people consider that there are a lot of other things taking place that are impacting our fish.

Jeff Van Pevenage is president and CEO of Columbia Grain International, the leading supplier of bulk grain, pulses, edible beans, and oilseeds, both conventional and organic, worldwide.