

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Large forest fires show the need for action

The time for allowing vast tracts of forest on state and federal lands to remain untouched from management is long over. Now, elected leaders and state and federal officials need to develop a comprehensive, actionable plan before every summer provides voters with a blaze such as the Bootleg Fire now scorching lands in southern Oregon.

Thankfully there already is some progress being made to find a way to manage our forests, so they do not become massive tinderboxes ready to explode when hit by lightning strikes. For example, Gov. Kate Brown in 2020 created the Governor's Council on Wildfire Response. The board's mission is to review Oregon's existing model for wildfire prevention and determine if it is still valid.

During the recent legislative session, Senate Bill 762C, was passed in the House and Senate. The bill casts a wide net, but, among other things, requires public utilities that provide electricity to develop and execute wildfire protection plans and directs the Oregon State Board of Forestry to create rules to develop a statewide map of wildfire risk.

So good, first steps are evident from the state. Yet considering the massive Bootleg Fire, far more needs to be done.

First, a comprehensive, full-scale plan needs to be developed, certified and put into place for all of Oregon's forests regarding fire mitigation. The plan needs to be effective, uncomplicated and funded appropriately.

Second, a solid determination needs to be made regarding the viability of logging forests to help mitigate fire risk. The subject is controversial and in many circles, considered a nonstarter. Already, though, some salvage logging is a common tool in fire restoration yet is almost always bitterly challenged by some conservation groups.

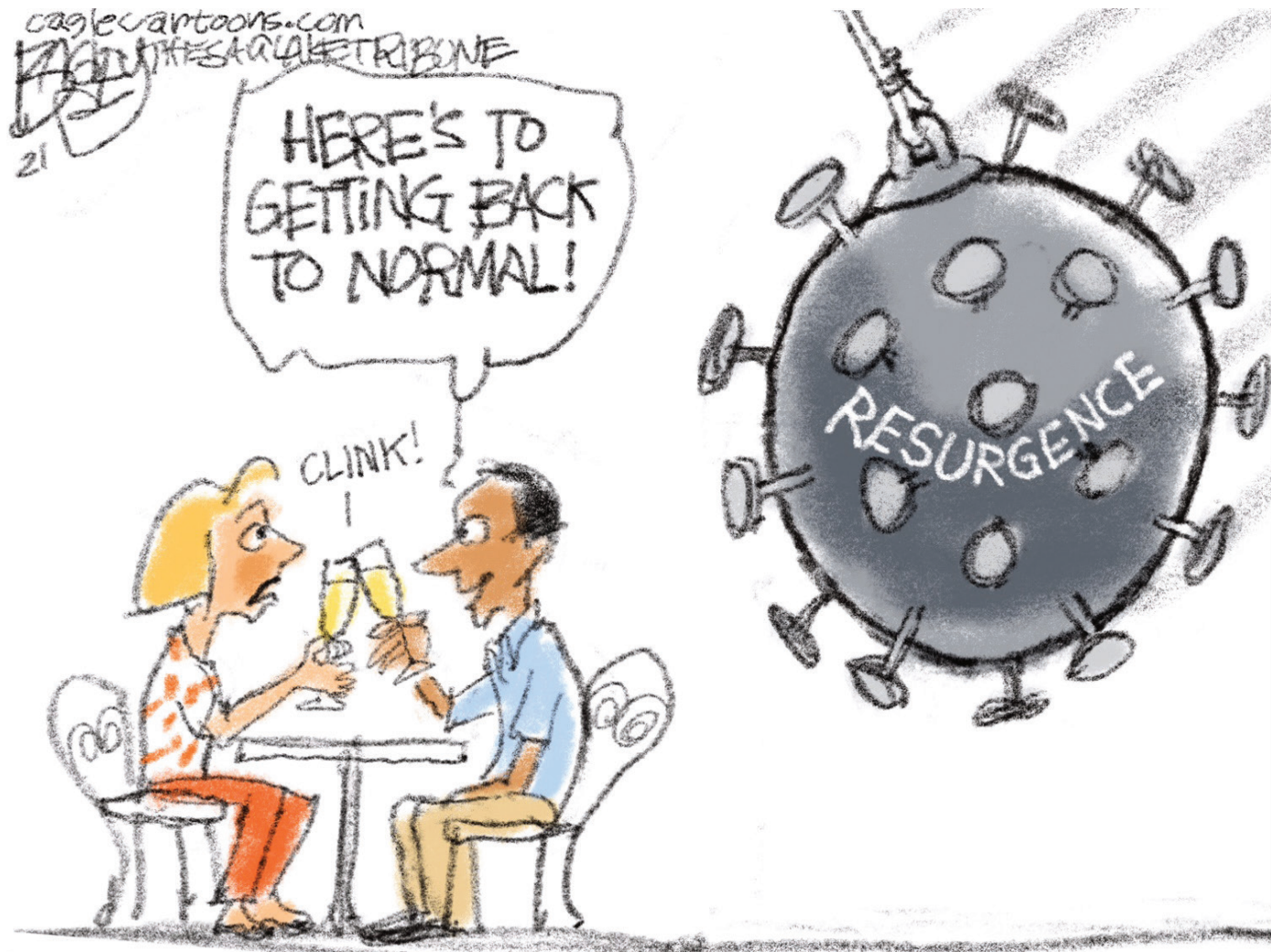
But we cannot continue to allow large, uninhabited sections of federal and state forests to essentially rot and await the first solid lightning strike to erupt into major fires.

Finally, unfortunately for taxpayers, more money needs to go into a plan to safeguard our forests.

At this point there is no denying climate change plays a role in the terrible forest fires burning in Oregon but to change the climate paradigm will take years and we don't have decades when it comes to our forests and the damage fire delivers to them.

We cannot sustain blazes like the Bootleg Fire indefinitely. If the Bootleg Fire is a harbinger of things to come, then we need to act fast.

There is no time to waste regarding the health of our forests.



YOUR VIEWS

America's 'war on drugs' needs to focus on supply

America has a drug problem. That's not news. For some reason the demand for drugs is a pandemic that has been around much longer than COVID-19. Nixon even declared a so-called war on drugs. We locked up some drug dealers and addicts but decades later the problem is worse than before.

We have hundreds of thousands of overdose deaths with the resulting misery that comes from that. I will leave it to the psychologists and sociologists to try and understand why people would rather be stoned than sober, why there is such a demand for drugs. I have an opinion on what to do about the supply side of the drug pandemic.

We need a real war on drugs. We need some leadership. I can't understand why my country thought I should go thousands of miles away to shoot some guy in black pajamas with an AK-47 who just wanted to see the invader gone but he was an enemy of our state and those who are killing my country enjoy legal protection. I lost a fire team partner over there, a cousin and some classmates. I lost a son to the drug pandemic.

Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, and we decided that within the hundreds of thousands of American citizens a few might be a threat so we interned thousands of good American citizens. I can't understand why we sit by and watch China and Mexico supply the cartels with literally tons of drugs and bring them across our open borders, supply the gangs with them for distribution and then fight over drug distribution territory, shoot up the inner cities then call it gun violence.

I had a little experience in war and my idea is that we should really fight a war on drugs. The first phase should be that Congress exercise its constitutional authority and declare war. A war on drugs that designates the suppliers as enemies of the state. If you are MS13 or in another gang, you are headed to an internment camp complete with barbed wire and machine gun towers. Like Lincoln did in the Civil War, habeas corpus should be suspended until the war is won. You

might get out if you supply good information on the suppliers.

The new idea of treating addicts who want something different is the right approach, but it is going to take time to set up programs. In the meantime, it is past time for a real war on the supply side. It is time to rid our nation of this threat. It is time to eliminate the enemy. We have that capability, what is lacking is the will.

Our "leadership" has had decades to act. It's time to demand that they support America with the same enthusiasm they show to their big political donors. If they won't act it is time for new leadership, a new congress, a real president.

Steve Culley
La Grande

The fine art of juggling

It's been about a month since Pendleton city officials announced they were expecting to sign an agreement with the Oregon Department of Transportation to assume the responsibility for the installation of required hand-capped ramps along the four major thoroughfares through town considered to be state highways.

It seems the elaborate ramp designs used by ODOT are significantly more expensive than those constructed by the city on residential streets. It was reasoned the city could save taxpayers a considerable amount of money by accepting the responsibility for installation of the ramps by using their own residential designs. Hurrah, hurrah — some rare good news for taxpayers.

Fast forward to the city's latest announcement. ODOT has offered to pick up the tab for the entire cost of those new ADA ramps, but with strings attached. The city must use the state (read much more expensive) designs. By signing on to this agreement, it appears the city manager will score a major coup d'etat for effective budgetary management, though strictly for appearance sake since increased costs to the taxpayers are ignored.

They seem to also forget it matters not who signs the check, when both the city and state budgets are funded by those same taxpayers. Those promised

savings have mysteriously evaporated.

We all want nice streets and sidewalks. However, this juggling act does nothing to instill public trust or paint that heartwarming picture sought by our leadership at city hall.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

Bentz is off target on wildfires

Our Rep. Cliff Bentz has words of wisdom for us about the tragic wildfire losses we are suffering in our state.

"People tend to blame climate change," he says, but the "true cause" is the "amount of wood." Partisan blaming of someone else's policies indeed tends to be much easier than addressing climate change or the multiple factors that scientific analysis can give us.

According to Bryant Baker, conservation director of nonprofit Los Padres ForestWatch, "a history of commercial logging, thinning, clear cutting, prescribed fire and other intensive management practices contributed to the Bootleg Fire's spread." Baker does real-time geographic information system analysis of how landscapes were historically managed while wildfires are actively burning on the land. "I do think this demonstrates that this kind of focus on removing vegetation from these wildlands, especially far away from human communities, is not doing anything to prevent these fires from becoming very large," he says.

Timothy Ingalsbee, executive director of Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics and Ecology, says that "past commercial logging and livestock grazing has encouraged wildfires," and notes that "when the fire entered the Gearhart Mountain Wilderness, an area with more potential fuel but fewer small trees and flammable grasses, it appears to have burned more slowly."

There will be more expert opinions to come, but please, Rep. Bentz, can we use the lens of science to show leadership and to develop solutions to prevent disasters? And can we spend less time trying to run from the real issues?

Jean Sullivan Carlton
Bend

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