

# Sticking with the facts despite changes


**ANDREW CUTLER**
**FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK**

Often I hear about the death of journalism or, at the very least, that the business has changed.

I agree journalism has changed. As far as its death, I think the naysayers are more than a bit premature.

That's because no matter what happens going forward in our world, people always will want an independent news source that can give them the clearest roadway to the truth as possible. Anymore, though, there is

even controversy over what is the truth, or what is true. In our business we stick to the facts. Facts are the basic building block on the way to finding the underlying truth in any issue. If a reporter can gather the facts, then a story can be built that — hopefully — presents the truth.

Newspapers — in whatever form — and at their best provide people in a community with an unbiased review of a specific subject. If done correctly, a story will deliver a set of facts that add up to a fundamental truth. It's not fancy, and really isn't all that complicated, but it can be difficult. That's because facts can sometimes be hard to find. Or those facts are shrouded inside a bureaucracy where

transparency isn't a normal course.

That's why what our reporters do is often difficult. Not only do they have a boss who is asking — demanding — for a story to be complete, but they must get the facts straight. In a good newsroom, facts and being factual are a big deal. Because when everything is said and done, all we must stand on is our reporting and our facts. We can't fall back on excuses or blame the government if we make a mistake. We must own that mistake — take responsibility — then painstakingly discover how a fact was missed or was wrong.

We built our entire structure on facts. Sometimes finding those facts is easy. The facts of a car crash, for example, are initially

clear. There was a crash. Someone was hurt or not hurt. Yet, when you are trying to wade through reams of public records to find a significant fact, the task can be daunting. Either way, though, our reporters must strive always to find those facts and report them accurately.

We have only our reputations as accurate and fair producers of news to fall back on, and that is why we must always strive to be precise in our reporting.

*Andrew Cutler is the publisher/editor of the East Oregonian and the regional editorial director for the EO Media Group, overseeing the East Oregonian and five more newspapers in Eastern Oregon.*

## Climate efforts need robust push


**BRAD REED**
**OTHER VIEWS**

In any given year, some Oregonians thrive while others struggle. Lately though, no one is untouched by society-wide crises, one after the next, breaking on us like waves in a relentless tide.

People all express similar feelings: overwhelmed, tired, and at a loss.

The global pandemic continues to disrupt our lives. The dangerous heating of the globe has erased hope and doubt — hope we would be spared from the climate crisis in the Northwest and doubt about the existential threat from disappearing water, raging wildfires, and fatal heat waves.

These global crises overwhelm us as individuals, making us feel powerless. Yet we have a chance to do our part if we raise our voices together.

Oregon is not taking responsibility for its share of the climate crisis. Despite important strides over the last decade or more, climate pollution continues to rise, primarily from burning fossil fuels and primarily at the hands of the state's largest corporate polluters.

Often we hear about reducing personal waste to save the planet. Drive less, recycle more. We witnessed the limits of changing personal habits when the pandemic forced us into it, at least for a time.

Our constrained lifestyles barely made a dent in global warming pollution. Our collective individual actions briefly dropped climate pollution by roughly 7%, about the amount scientists say we have to achieve every year to stave off the worst global upheaval. It turns out the "personal carbon footprint" was an invention of the fossil fuel industry to keep us from demanding better behavior from them. Not anymore.

Most of us do our part. It's time for big corporations, such as oil companies, to show the same level of responsibility for cutting pollution. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is close to wrapping up a year-plus long process to create a program to hold these huge fossil fuel polluters accountable for what they put into our air and water. It's called the Climate Protection Program.

Oregon will require some of the state's largest polluters to transition off of fossil fuels in the coming decades by adopting clean, energy efficient technologies — a necessary change to protect our health and create economic opportunity to build back better than before. Each year, less pollution will be allowed as clean power, such as wind and solar, come online, more zero-emissions vehicles hit the road and our homes and

buildings are upgraded to perform better by wasting less energy.

These improvements will save Oregonians money on utilities and fuel bills, and protect our health from air pollution, which means fewer trips to the doctor with ailments such as asthma, fewer missed days of work and school, fewer expensive medicines to buy, and longer lives.

The Climate Protection Program has a lot of potential to help Oregon hold large polluters accountable. Yet, the draft rules DEQ has put forward are only a half-step toward fulfilling what Oregonians deserve and demand.

For more than a year, Oregonians from business and labor, public health and environmental action, tribes, youth,

and people of faith and communities on the front line of the climate crisis have joined together to demand a bolder program from DEQ.

Hundreds of Oregonians have submitted public comments to demand three significant changes to strengthen the program before it becomes final this year:

No. 1: Follow the science. DEQ must adopt stronger targets that will cut climate pollution in half by

2030, as scientific consensus says we must.

No. 2: Hold industrial polluters accountable. While the program covers many major polluters, many others convinced DEQ to give them loopholes and excuse them from the pollution cap. These major industrial polluters must also be required to reduce emissions.

No. 3: Invest to reduce pollution and benefit frontline communities. DEQ has designed an alternative for large polluters in the program to pay for clean energy projects in Oregon communities, rather than reduce their own pollution. The rules for these investments are too vague. They must include stronger language to guarantee both real pollution reductions and investment in communities hit hardest by climate change and fossil fuel pollution — low-income, rural, Black, Indigenous and communities of color.

After a thorough process with a lot of input, these protections must be strengthened and adopted without delay. Oregonians simply cannot afford to lock in another year of pollution as usual. It's time for Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission, both of whom oversee DEQ, to answer the call for a Climate Protection Program that lives up to its name.

*Brad Reed is the campaign manager for Renew Oregon, a statewide coalition working to move the state to a clean energy economy with good jobs and healthier, more equitable communities.*

**MOST OF US DO OUR PART. IT'S TIME FOR BIG CORPORATIONS, SUCH AS OIL COMPANIES, TO SHOW THE SAME LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR CUTTING POLLUTION.**



## Who does the proposed River Democracy Act really benefit?


**LYNN FINDLEY**

**MARK OWENS**
**OTHER VIEWS**

Sen. Ron Wyden has proposed adding more than 4,700 miles of waterways to the federal Wild & Scenic Rivers System in Oregon. With half-mile no-touch buffers, the River Democracy Act will apply access and management restrictions to 3 million acres of federal land, much of it in our communities in Northeastern Oregon.

There are significant issues still unaddressed and important questions still unanswered for such a consequential bill that is now moving through the U.S. Senate.

For starters, there are no detailed maps available from federal agencies that allow Oregonians to see where these designations are, and how these designations would affect private property, public access and other traditional uses such as ranching. The only available map on the internet appears to be produced by a Portland environmental group that helped write the bill.

Secondly, the original Wild & Scenic Rivers Act was intended to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural and recreational values in a free-flowing condition. From a list provided by the bill's supporters, we know 85% of the bill's Wild & Scenic designations would be applied to small creeks, gulches, draws and unnamed tributaries — many of which are not free-flowing and do not even carry water throughout the year.

If these small creeks, gulches, draws and unnamed tributaries are worthy of such a designation, why does this bill subvert the careful administrative study and review process under the original act? And why does this bill impose half-mile buffers in these areas, when the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act only calls for quarter-mile buffers?

Federal lands are at high risk of wildfire and need active management, thinning and fuels reduction work. Wildfires in recent years have scorched watersheds and degraded water quality as sediment and ash is deposited into our river systems. In 2020, more than 76% of acres burned in Oregon occurred on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

Management already is restricted in riparian areas. Would imposing even more restrictions through Wild & Scenic designations and half-mile buffers really make it easier to reduce wildfire risks?

Oregonians are right to ask why the River Democracy Act will add more restrictions to 3 million acres at a time when land management agencies are struggling to implement proven and proactive forest management activities to reduce the risks of wildfires to forests and watersheds.

The reasons for agency inaction include a lack of funding and personnel, and the cost and time it takes them to satisfy exhaustive analysis and regulatory requirements. In addition to the half-mile buffers, the River Democracy Act will require agencies to prepare exhaustive river management plans that will take years to complete, drain agency resources and open the door to ongoing and additional litigation.

Proponents of the bill claim the River Democracy Act will support wildfire prevention efforts and protect private property rights. Yet history shows Wild & Scenic River designations only encourage more lawsuits and analysis paralysis, especially where they intersect with private property and other public land uses.

As this bill advances through Congress, citizens should be asking: What does the bill actually do, why is it necessary and does it really benefit rural and frontier Oregon?

*Sen. Lynn Findley (Senate District 30) and Rep. Mark Owens (House District 60), both Republicans, represent Eastern Oregon in the state Legislature.*

## It's a scary thing when ghostbusting hits home


**TAMMY MALGESINI**
**INSIDE MY SHOES**

I recently started watching a hilarious new comedy on CBS. "Ghosts" is about a young urban couple who are excited about the prospects of inheriting an old country estate.

The fact the structure is in great disrepair is the least of Samantha and Jay's worries — it's inhabited by the spirits of numerous of its past residents. And after a blow to the head, Samantha is able to see and communicate with them.

I was always a bit of a skeptic when it came to ghosts and things that go bump in the night. I wanted to believe there's a rational explanation for eerie things.

I've worked on several stories, following teams of paranormal investigators. I remember one time at Pendleton Center for the Arts, a team member was all wide-eyed while speculating what it was they were seeing through the darkened window. Peering in, I rolled my eyes, thinking they had an incredibly wild imagination.

When people would share about their supposed ghostly encounters, I found myself questioning their sanity — maybe even rolling my eyes. Then I experienced a weird and unexplainable phenomenon. And it didn't just happen once, it occurred three times.

My husband and I received a set of glasses as a wedding gift. We were pretty excited because John and I seemed to be hard on glasses, always breaking them — and they were a matching set with three different sizes!

As far as glass goes, they were incred-

ibly sturdy. After more than three years and two moves, they had survived without a single one of them getting broken. And then, within a period of several hours three of them were destroyed.

The morning after moving into a house in Hermiston, I went into the bedroom to get a glass off the nightstand. I stopped in my tracks — the whole top of the glass was missing. I carried its remains into the kitchen to show John.

While we stood there pondering what could possibly have happened leading to the glass's demise, we heard an explosion in the cabinet.

After exchanging bewildered looks, I cautiously opened the cabinet. The glass in the very center had exploded, leaving shards of glass throughout the shelf. A bit freaked out, I removed all of them and began rinsing them off.

To ward off bad juju and to add levity

to the situation, I started repeating, "Devil glasses, I'm not afraid. Devil glasses, I'm not afraid." And then, one of them exploded in my hand. I bolted out the front door into the yard.

Despite only sleeping in the house for one night, I was ready to move. With the promise of a dog and getting rid of the rest of the glasses, John convinced me to return inside. I have no idea what caused the strange phenomenon, but we lived in the house for six years with no further strange occurrences.

To quote a phrase from the movie "Ghostbusters, "I ain't afraid of no ghosts" — well, maybe just a little.

*Tammy Malgesini, the East Oregonian community writer, enjoys spending time with her husband and two German shepherds, as well as entertaining herself with random musings.*