

Wolf management in Oregon is a train wreck



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I recently received another email update from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Wolf and Livestock Updates list. I opened the message and clicked the link anticipating bad news.

Another wolf had been killed by the department in Northeast Oregon. A 2-year old male trapped, tranquilized and then euthanized by the state. His crime? Being a member of a community of native carnivores trying to make a living on a landscape overrun with domestic livestock that have displaced their traditional food sources, mainly elk and deer.

This young wolf was a member of the Chesnimnus Pack, near the town of Joseph, whose range encompasses many active federally managed grazing allotments on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Reports of depredations — wolves killing livestock — attributed to the Chesnimnus Pack began rolling in this April, which resulted in fish and wildlife officials issuing an order to kill two wolves before the end of April.

In June, an additional four wolves were marked for death. As of today, three of those six wolves have been wiped out by the state. Not included in this tally is the additional wolf lost at the hands of a poacher in January. This onslaught of death comes on the heels of a bloody 2021 for Oregon, where 26 wolves were

documented killed, up from 10 in 2020.

Killing wolves is counterproductive to many of the wildlife management and habitat conservation programs administered by the ODFW and undermines the benefits that having wolves on the landscape brings to all of us. After wolves were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park, the ecology of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem began to reset itself.

Riparian areas — biodiversity

riparian areas for food, shelter and breeding habitat. Promoting biodiversity helps ward off extinction where one species' existence is dependent on another. We are now in the throes of the sixth mass extinction and we humans depend on a functioning biosphere for our own survival.

As wolves rightfully return to their native range across Northeast Oregon and the rest of the state, livestock producers will experience more losses

their young-of-the-year at the home ranch with their mothers to nurse until they are ready to fend for themselves before releasing them.

Perhaps the most maddening aspect to this ongoing saga is the agency's disregard for the best available science. We know now that when managers kill wolves and deplete a pack, the remaining wolves target livestock with more vigor, because livestock are the easiest prey. It is a vicious cycle of death until an entire pack is extirpated. Take for example the Lookout Pack, also from Northeast Oregon.

Eight wolves were lethally removed for killing livestock in the fall of 2021, decimating the pack to the point where no breeding pair remained. Killing off entire packs of wolves simply cannot be the answer.

The influence peddled by the livestock industry must no longer reign supreme over wildlife management here in Oregon and across the West. This largely unchecked hegemony has resulted in untold slaughter of wolves — and myriad other creatures ranging from beavers to prairie dogs — over the centuries. Times must change.

We should demand better of our wildlife managers who are supposed to safeguard all of our wildlife in the public trust for all Oregonians.

Adam Bronstein is the Nevada-Oregon director for Western Watersheds Project, a nonprofit conservation group dedicated to protecting and restoring wildlife and watersheds throughout the American West. This column originally appeared on the Oregon Capital Chronicle website.

“EIGHT WOLVES WERE LETHALLY REMOVED FOR KILLING LIVESTOCK IN THE FALL OF 2021, DECIMATING THE PACK TO THE POINT WHERE NO BREEDING PAIR REMAINED. KILLING OFF ENTIRE PACKS OF WOLVES SIMPLY CANNOT BE THE ANSWER.”

hotspots — soon recovered from overgrazing by deer and elk because wolves began keeping them constantly on the move. This dispersed movement allowed plant communities to reestablish themselves, providing home and sustenance to a host of species. Trout, juvenile salmon and steelhead are provided with cooler water refuges, more insects to eat and more cover from predators because of the shade and habitat provided by stream-side vegetation.

Birds and land animals also rely on

unless they change the way they operate. Based on past and current responses, department officials seem primed to continue slaughtering wolves at an increasing rate in lockstep with the wolf recovery.

These dead livestock, however, are mostly due to mismanagement. The vast majority of livestock taken by wolves are calves, which are tender, small-bodied and easy prey. If livestock operators wanted to cut their losses to wolf predation by wide margins, they could leave



ANDREW
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

A thought of encouragement for the future

I am always amazed about how the people of our region respond when a natural disaster strikes.

The most recent example — the work of so many in Wallowa County after an epic hailstorm delivered havoc — is just one of a number of cases where people jumped in to help in the wake of a disaster.

Yet that kind of resiliency isn't out of the ordinary. When the Umatilla River flooded in 2020, the area residents displayed the same kind of vigor to help their neighbors.

We often spend a great deal of time focusing on what divides us as a nation, state or region. From the 50,000-foot level it might appear as if our region — or our nation — is so bitterly divided that helping each other out in a time of crisis would be a non-starter.

True, there is a lot that divides us politically. Just a cursory glance at the TV news every night — no matter what network you view — shows that firm battle lines are drawn over a host of issues. And there is a whole lot of shouting going on.

I still, though, believe in the basic good nature of the people who live in our great nation. I agree it is difficult to see through the smoke of our current political discourse to be able to realize we have far more in common than not.

We seem to be eager to stand on the other side of a particular political fence and do a lot of shouting, but when a serious crisis appears, we jump to help. We step up and converge on places of crisis and do all we can to help others.

Often, I am inclined to believe that kind of performance is simply unique to our part of the state. Those of who live in Eastern Oregon are a hardy and resilient bunch. We are used to challenge and familiar with overcoming those obstacles.

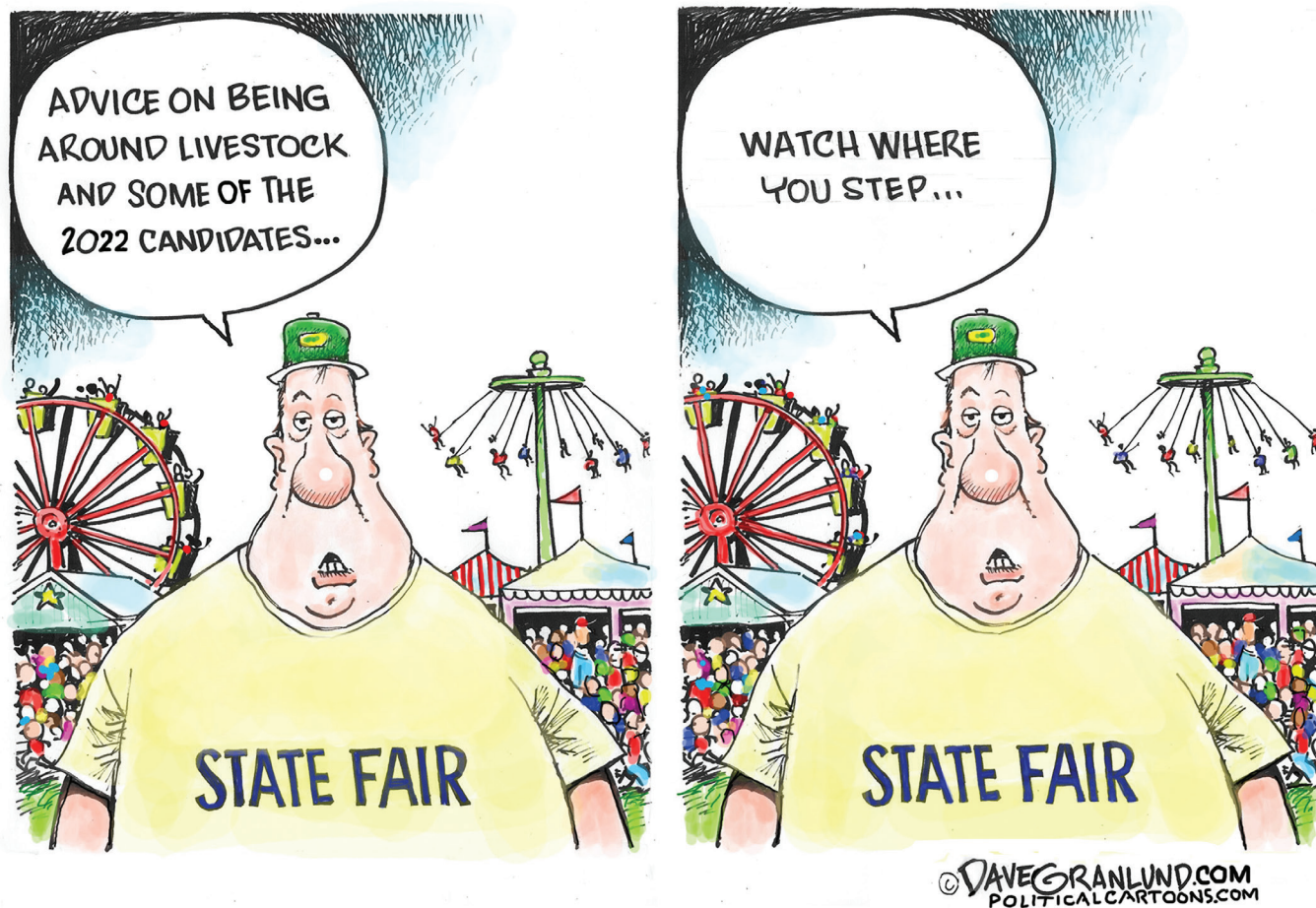
When I really ponder it, though, I see that Americans in general are resilient. We flock to help out when a hurricane of tornado hits an area. We give up our time to lend a hand.

So just about the time I think we are so polarized we can barely function a natural disaster strikes — such as the hail storm in Wallowa County — and people run to help. They do it without payment and without the goal of praise. They do it because it's right.

We have a diverse and beautiful region and it is populated for the most part by good people who are willing to help when they are needed.

That's not only refreshing to see but also encouraging for the future.

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Free, simple tax filing puts interest of Americans above corporate profits



JUAN CARLOS
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OTHER VIEWS

Paying taxes is our civic duty. The government's duty is to make it as easy and inexpensive as possible for us to pay our taxes. But for too long, Congress has failed to uphold this responsibility, favoring instead corporations that profit from our need to file tax returns.

A bill recently introduced in Congress would fix this problem. Sen. Jeff Merkley and Reps. Earl Blumenauer and Peter DeFazio have co-sponsored the Tax Filing Simplification Act, which would create a simple and free way for Americans to file their taxes. All other members of Oregon's congressional delegation should jump on board this common-sense reform.

Right now, it costs the average taxpayer about 13 hours and \$240 every year to file a federal tax return, according to Internal Revenue Service figures.

People bear these costs and hassles even though, for many of them, the IRS already has all the information on hand to figure out their tax bill. Do you get a W-2 from your employer showing how much you got paid? So does the IRS. Do you get a 1099 form from the bank telling you how much interest you earned? So does the IRS. The reality is that people often spend time and money simply to tell the IRS what it already knows.

For some families, the harm is greater. The cost and complexity of tax filing deters many Americans struggling to get by on low wages from filing a tax return. While their low incomes may mean they aren't required to file a tax return,

it also means they lose out on tax credits designed to help their families make ends meet. In doing so, they miss out on several thousand dollars that would make their lives and that of their children a bit easier.

The problem of families not claiming tax credits, even though they qualify for them, is worse in Oregon than just about every other state.

“THE PROBLEM OF FAMILIES NOT CLAIMING TAX CREDITS, EVEN THOUGH THEY QUALIFY FOR THEM, IS WORSE IN OREGON THAN JUST ABOUT EVERY OTHER STATE.”

The Tax Filing Simplification Act would require the IRS to give people easy access to wage and other data needed to file a tax return that the agency already has in its possession. Such a system of pre-filled tax returns is not new; other countries already do it this way, making filing taxes a zip for their people.

There's more. This legislation would also allow taxpayers with simple returns to choose to have the government fully prepare their tax returns. And it would direct the IRS to create its own free, online tax preparation and filing service. Yes, free.

Why doesn't our country make it free and easy for people to file their tax returns? Because a few big corporations profit from the current, dysfunctional system.

In 2002, the Bush administration proposed creating a free tax filing system, but a massive lobbying campaign by Intuit — owner of TurboTax — killed the idea. Instead, the IRS agreed to allow a handful of corporations, in theory, to provide free tax filing software to as many as 70% of tax filers.

In practice, few people access the free service. In 2021, less than 3% of tax filers used the free service. Intuit, for one, made it so that users could not find the free service, while steering low-income taxpayers to its paid service. Earlier this year, the company paid \$141 million to settle a claim it had deceived users with promises of free tax filing — a slap on the wrist for a corporation that hauled in billions in profits over that period.

Ultimately, the deal between the IRS and the corporate tax preparers collapsed after the IRS put in place measures to rein in the corporate shenanigans. H&R Block pulled out of the deal in 2020, followed by Intuit's exit in 2021.

It's long past due to put the interests of the American people above those of a few giant corporations profiting from our civic duty to pay taxes. The Tax Filing Simplification Act would save people money and hassles, while enabling many low-paid families to claim tax credits that improve their well-being.

It's great that some members of Oregon's congressional delegation are already fighting for this common-sense reform. The rest of the delegation should get on board.

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