

We're managing people for wolves' sake

“Wolf management” is a misnomer. What state officials in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and elsewhere have been doing is managing

people. The wolves seem to be doing just fine; it's the people who need help.

The line of reasoning wildlife managers use is this: When wolves attack

livestock, the predators aren't at fault, the people are. It's not the wolf's fault that a lamb jumped into its mouth, it's the lamb owner's fault. He, or she, just didn't use enough fladry and special flashing lights or hire enough range riders to protect the livestock from the wolves.

That's the topsy-turvy world we live in when it comes to wolves spreading across the region. Just two weeks ago another wolf popped up in Southern Oregon, bringing to three the number — plus a couple of pups — that have set up housekeeping in that part of the state. That brought this admonition from an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist to a group of Southern Oregon cattlemen: “We have wolves, folks. They are not going away. I realize this is a lifestyle change.”

What that means is any newly arrived wolves take priority over ranchers who have been there for generations. Ranchers now must accommodate the behaviors of their new neighbors — including their diet of fresh lamb and beef. The state will help with some of the costs, but any other costs will come out of their pockets.

Presumably, the newest wolf in Southern Oregon followed the paw prints of OR-7 and his new mate, trekking 230-plus miles across the state to take up residence there. One can only guess how many others have followed this latter-day version of the Oregon Trail and haven't yet been discovered.

These observations add up to this: Wolves seem to be getting along fine despite any attempts to manage them. They randomly show up, sometimes with a mate and pups, and managers can only take note of it. No hands-on management is needed for the wolves. It's the ranchers who must manage their cattle and sheep differently in an effort to prevent them from becoming endangered.

That's the odd thing about the Endangered Species Act: It treats all species the same. An endangered worm whose only worry is making it across the road before the next pickup truck drives by is put in the same system as a wolf that resides at the top of the food chain and is fully capable of fending for itself.

Wildlife managers are taking a census of all the wolves they can find. Good luck. It appears counting wolves is more a best-guess than anything.

In the meantime, members of Congress in four Upper Midwest states have proposed legislation to take wolves off the federal endangered species list in that region.

It's time to do the same everywhere else, too.

EDITORIAL

The voice of the Chieftain



College playoffs delivered

Another college football season has come and gone, and not quietly in our household.

This year marked a significant change in the way that the NCAA crowns its champion, mercifully ending the Bowl Championship Series era — or BCS era, for short — or without the C, for accuracy. Finally, college football fans got what they have long been clamoring for: a playoff system to determine the champion.

You can count me among those who think that the new College Selection Committee — which ranks teams throughout the season and gives final rankings of the top four teams after Conference Championship games have been played — was an upgrade over the previous, computer-generated rating system. I kept a close eye on those Selection Committee rankings as the season played out, and I was pleasantly surprised that the SEC bias that seemed endemic to the old system did not pervade the new rankings.

I also think the Selection Committee got it right when they chose Alabama, Oregon, Florida State, and Ohio State as their top four teams to compete in the playoffs. Their only controversial choice was Ohio State, which leapfrogged TCU and Baylor on Conference Championship weekend to earn the 4-spot. But that upgrade seemed justified partly because Ohio State pummeled Wisconsin 59-0 to win the Big 10 Championship, and partly because the Big 12, where TCU and Bay-



POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

John McColgan

lor both play, does not have a Conference Championship game.

A few days before Christmas, the bowl festivities began, with 39 college bowl games being played in all, counting the National Championship game. I am only slightly embarrassed to tell you that I watched the vast majority of these games, and a little more apologetic to the neighbors and especially to my tolerant wife for all the noise that I made while I was watching them.

One of the things that delighted me this year was the surprisingly mediocre performance of the teams from the vaunted — and, I would say, overrated — SEC. This year, SEC teams went a mere 7-5 in their bowl games, finishing 2-4 against ranked teams. Stuningly, the highly esteemed SEC West Division went only 2-5, while the lower-rated SEC East held up their end by finishing 5-0 in bowl games. By comparison, the PAC 12 had a better year, going 6-3 overall, with a modest 2-2 record against ranked opponents. But considering that two of those ranked opponents were teams that made the final four, that ain't bad, folks.

Oregon fans can be proud of their Ducks, even though they came up short

in the Championship game. Their first playoff game against Florida State was close until about halfway through the third quarter, but then the Ducks' fast-paced offense and opportunistic defense put a whooping on Florida State for the rest of the game. The final result of 59-20 pretty much said it all.

Conversely, looking back on Oregon's Championship game against Ohio State, while the final score of 42-20 probably expresses how thoroughly Ohio State's running game dominated Oregon's defense, it's easy to forget the fact that with just a few seconds remaining in the third quarter, Oregon was down by only one point. I think that both Oregon's players and their fans will probably remember this game as a matter of missed opportunities (especially a couple of key dropped passes) and an inability to establish and maintain Oregon's typical rapid-fire pace on offense. Ultimately, Oregon fans have to give credit where credit is due to Ohio State's running back, Ezekiel Elliot, who ran the ball down the Ducks' throats all night for a total of 246 yards.

They say that “almost” only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades, and Oregon's players and fans might agree with that sentiment. But there's no shame in coming in second, for the second time in the last five years in college football. Hang in there, Ducks, and hold your heads high.

John McColgan writes from his home in Joseph.

Oregon's coming carbon load

We in the Pacific Northwest have watched with some complacency in recent years as oil trains have caught fire in far-away places and ships have disgorged petroleum cargoes and fuel on previously pristine shores. Reporting by the Seattle-based Sightline Institute reminds us that we have already suffered some serious oil spills and had numerous near misses. We also face a future that includes proposals for an astonishing amount of additional oil traffic.

Summing up north Oregon and Washington schemes to export coal and natural gas, we could be transporting five times more carbon than the Keystone XL Pipeline.

- Oil pipelines. Two new oil pipelines would be capable of carrying more than 1.1 million barrels per day, enough to emit 199 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually.

- Oil-by-rail facilities. Eleven oil-by-rail facilities at refineries or port terminals could move 858,900 barrels per day, enough to emit 132 million metric tons of carbon dioxide each year.

There are major oil-by-rail proposals in our immediate vicinity, including three on the South Washington Coast at Grays Har-



The Daily Astorian

bor and three on the Columbia River — including a major expansion of an operation in Clatskanie. The largest, Tesoro/Savage in Vancouver, Wash., would be capable of moving 360,000 barrels of oil per day. It is working its way through the permitting process and expected to be up and running soon, though the plunge in oil prices may curb enthusiasm for it.

These fossil fuel plans win political support, even here in the environmentally conscious Northwest. Visible opposition can be dangerous: Witness Catherine Mater's summary dismissal from the Oregon Transportation Commission after she voted against a coal-export facility. Terminals create jobs that are often union affiliated, while making oodles of money for investors. This creates a bipartisan groundswell of support in the corridors of power in Salem, Olympia and Washington, D.C.

It is questionable whether ordinary coastal citizens get anything out of these plans,

with the exception of eventual trickle-down benefits from state general funds. We certainly face more risk, both from spills and from an increasingly unpredictable climate and ocean.

It's easy to lose track of just how often we've narrowly dodged what could have been catastrophic spills. Sightline reports an overall survey here: tinyurl.com/pssvh23. In the past 20 years, there have been five occasions when ships or barges got into trouble in the Columbia estuary or near enough that they could have ended razor clamming, oystering and other key resource-based industries.

There are limits on what we can do to influence energy-export proposals. But at a minimum, we should be prepared to comment on them and to exert pressure on elected officials to push for maximum safety and accountability. Corporations that profit must also bear all the financial risks. They must insure that avoiding spills is their first priority and that response plans are effective and fully funded.

The Daily Astorian, based in Astoria, is a sister publication to the Wallowa County Chieftain.

Keep ECX race on the front page

To the Editor:

I am very disappointed that the articles about the sled dog teams and mushers were buried on the very last page of the Chieftain last week, and page 10 the week before. Many people traveled a great distance to our beautiful county to participate and watch the four day events. I saw license plates from Utah, Alberta, Montana, Saskatchewan, Alaska, Idaho, Washington, of course Oregon, and one of the volunteers told me there was even a team from New Zealand! There were a record number of 26 teams in all. I met a couple from Scappoose and they “finally made the trip” just for the event, and were staying several days. Any event that requires 200 volunteers (your quote) should get front page coverage, such as the CJD Rodeo, or the Thunder Run. It truly is an event



that the is enjoyed by all county residents, and many others from far away.

Karen Mason
Joseph

Wildlife watchers' impact counts

To the Editor:

As the Chieftain pointed out in a recent editorial, it's true that hunting has had economic benefits for Eastern Oregon which are now fading as the sport gradually loses popularity.

But all is not lost. According to the 2011

Fishing, Hunting, & Wildlife-Associated Recreation (FHVAR 2011) study from which the editorial drew its figures, Oregon wildlife watchers spent seven times as much (\$1.7 billion) as hunters (\$250 million). This created an economic impact state-wide by bunny-watchers of \$3.1 billion vs \$421 million by hunters. The 2011 figures show that across the board, wildlife watching generates from seven to more than ten times the business, wages, jobs, and taxes than does hunting.

Eastern Oregon will garner ever more economic benefit from non-consumptive enjoyment of wildlife. Wallowa County, home of Oregon's Little Switzerland, Hell's Canyon and the ever-more-famous Zumwalt Prairie, will be a net winner as hunting wanes and wildlife watching waxes.

Wally Sykes
Joseph



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