

# It's definitely time to grow better forest policies

It's good to see some of the West's U.S. senators working across the political aisle in hopes of developing better forest management strategies in light of this summer's disastrous wildfires.

As reported by the Seattle Times, Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., and Sen. John

Barrasso, R-Wyo., last Thursday took testimony from wildfire specialists "and pledged bipartisan action to boost forest-thinning and controlled burns — and an end to the raiding of the U.S. Forest Service's fire-prevention budget."

A major revamping of forest planning is timely. Though still sparsely populated by global standards, Pacific Northwest forests are increasingly interspersed with housing, at the same time that climatic changes result in tinderbox-like conditions that are consuming thousands of acres this summer. Some fires will almost certainly smolder until heavy winter rains begin, representing a continuing risk they might jump beyond containment measures.

Cantwell is working on a law to stop "fire-borrowing," a federal budget practice that shortchanges fire prevention and preparation in favor of other spending priorities. Her proposals include upgrading the U.S. Forest Service's antiquated tanker fleet, the planes that can be deployed to make rapid and meaningful progress in blocking the path of fires approaching homes and other valuable assets.

Barrasso, a former television M.D. who seemed to shed his analytical scientific mind once ensconced in the Senate, is at least partially disposed toward working on a forest-management strategy that doesn't rely on a return to discredited 20th century industrial forestry approaches.

Thinning and maintenance are clearly needed. A forestry expert from Western Washington University testified to the senators that there is a 400-million-acre backlog — an area larger than Alaska — of forestland that needs to be thinned and have branches and other fuels removed that contribute to big fires. He cautioned, however, "We can't cut our way out of this."

Peter Goldmark, Washington state's elected commissioner of public lands, commented on a need to modernize fire-detection — using airplane flyovers, satellites or drones to catch fires when they are still small enough to quickly snuff out. Such rapid, targeted response could have saved lives and averted vast property damage this summer.

Residents of rural areas are tired of having their homelands be under-funded, involuntary parks by urban people who have an attachment to the idea of wilderness, but no understanding of the complex economic and scientific factors at play in managing forests that are reasonably safe, functional and productive. As communities in Oregon and Washington move past the immediate crises of controlling this summer's wildfires, the positive next steps should revolve around involving forestland residents in setting the stage for preempting future conflagrations.

Congress can play a valuable role in this by making sure forest money is applied to forest issues, and by helping the West's diverse constituencies find long-range ways to work together toward forest health.

**EDITORIAL**  
The voice of the Chieftain

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## Conditions not conducive to humor

Holy smokes. And flames. And evacuations. Three weeks ago I drove out of the county to go work at fire camps in Idaho. I was almost embarrassed looking at the Wallowa River while it's so low and showing more skin than seems proper. Reminded me of glancing at the floor, trying to hold a conversation with someone wearing a hospital gown. But I had to peek, since the river was revealing the anatomy under a few fishing runs of particular interest. Some were about what I figured, but there were a few formations I wouldn't have guessed so I got a good long gander at why I've been losing flies by the handful in some stretches. Be warned, fish. I've seen the blueprints now.

It's so dry and crispy the big fire season projections have sure enough come true. I'm mailing this dispatch to Chieftain headquarters from a wildfire Incident Command Post over in Smiths Ferry, Idaho. A lovely wide spot in the road. My job is setting up and wiring yurts, then fixing things when breakers pop. Calculating the capacity for an electrical circuit is easy enough. You've got your volts, watts, amps and if you times or divide those or something, legend says it reveals how many map plotters, laptops, modems, printers, space heaters, air conditioners and coffee makers you can operate. Or ... just don't plug a whole bunch



**AND FURTHERMORE**

Jon Rombach

of stuff into one outlet thingy. That's my method, which is much, much easier to remember.

I usually send these columns in a few seconds before the last minute, but this time I got ahead of the game and wrote a fun little story about a fire out here they named The Not Creative Fire Fire. I thought that was awfully cute. That column had some jokes and stuff. I was pretty happy with it for having typed it in a tent next to a parking lot with a generator running in my ear. Then I saw the Chieftain headlines from back home and got updates from friends about Troy being evacuated, Hurricane Creek residents being on standby to vamoose, thirteen wildland firefighters killed this year in the West, fire budgets going dry, National Guard called up, Australians firefighters called over ... it's just really not all that amusing.

I did see in the news some talk of shifting funds toward preventative fire management to reduce the threat, rather than waiting to pour money on fires once they blow up into a crisis. That seems like

something worth pursuing. Having spent time driving out to spike camps recently on forest roads, where crews are staged to get back deeper in the hills to attack fires — it appears to me that having road access can sure be a handy thing. I know the drive to close forest roads in the Wallowa-Whitman is a great big complicated issue not for little ol' me to understand — and that's good, cause I don't understand it. And I suppose it's a drop in the bucket to remove dead wood one pickup load at a time, but I don't believe I'll ever understand how there's not enough budget to reduce fuels and meanwhile you've got woodcutters actually paying to go remove dead trees from the forest, but that will be even more restricted if the road closures go through. Also, will somebody explain to me why we can't go cut wood all winter if the roads aren't snowed out? I don't get that.

But I guess we can worry about snow-related matters if we ever get any of it. Thanks to all you fighters of fire out there digging line, hosing down and snuffing out the trouble spots. And will somebody go check on Smokey? Make sure he's staying hydrated? All that fur combined with the summer he's having is just a recipe for heat exhaustion.

Be safe.  
Jon Rombach is a local columnist for the Chieftain.

## Animal research key in AIDS fight

Scientists may be on the cusp of curing AIDS.

Researchers at the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia are running the largest randomized clinical trial for an AIDS therapy in the world. The drug they're testing has shown the potential to reduce the level of HIV in a patient's blood. That's the first step toward a cure.

Treatments like this one were unimaginable just a few years ago. Since then, HIV/AIDS has transformed from a death sentence to, in many cases, a manageable chronic disease.

For that transformation, we can thank animal research, the indispensable foundation of most medical and scientific studies. And yet many animal-rights advocates continue to push for prohibition of animal models in biomedical research.

The facts are not on their side. As recently as 1995, HIV/AIDS was the leading cause of death for Americans ages 25-44. That year, AIDS killed more than 49,500 people around the country. Two decades later, annual deaths from the disease have dropped nearly three-quarters, to 13,700.

More impressive, 20-year-old Americans diagnosed with HIV/AIDS today can, with treatment, expect to reach their early 70s. That's just a few years shy of the average life expectancy for the general population. Thanks to medication, mothers with HIV can now give birth to HIV-free babies.

**GUEST COLUMN**

Frankie L. Trull

These recent advances are almost entirely due to highly effective antiretroviral drugs designed to prevent the virus from multiplying. The research that paved the way for these powerful treatments would have been impossible without research in nonhuman primates.

In the early days of the epidemic, scientists discovered the Simian Immunodeficiency Virus in monkeys. Studying infected macaque monkeys helped scientists understand how HIV/AIDS worked in humans. These monkeys also received some of the first promising antiretroviral drugs.

The first approved AIDS drug was the direct result of early experiments with mice. Known as AZT, the antiretroviral was first shown to suppress mouse retroviral disease in 1986.

Primate models also played a valuable role in the creation of Saquinavir, the first HIV protease inhibitor — a medicine that attacks the virus' ability to replicate. Before clinical trials began, animal tests demonstrated the drug to be safe for humans.

Today, protease inhibitors are an essential part of the drug cocktails that extend the lives of HIV/AIDS patients around the world.

Despite these achievements, many an-

imal-rights advocates continue to oppose primate models in HIV/AIDS research. They claim that techniques like computer modeling and population studies can replace animal research.

In reality, there is no substitute for primate studies. To ensure that medicines are safe and effective, scientists must study them in living systems that closely resemble those in humans. Abandoning animal testing would halt today's most promising lines of inquiry.

Consider the ongoing search for an AIDS vaccine, which relies heavily on primate studies.

In 2013, researchers at Oregon Health and Science University successfully tested an experimental vaccine for SIV, the version of HIV that affects monkeys. After administering the vaccine, the researchers exposed the monkeys to a highly potent form of SIV. Half of the monkeys never contracted the virus. Over time, those that did were able to fight off the virus entirely.

This discovery, which could conceivably lead to the eradication of HIV/AIDS, wouldn't have happened without the use of primates.

In sub-Saharan Africa, more than 1 million people die of AIDS each year. Ending — or restricting — primate studies and other forms of animal research will only delay the eradication of this deadly global disease.

Frankie L. Trull is president of the Foundation for Biomedical Research.

### Where to write

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