

Congress should speak up against EPA boondoggle

The silence has been deafening. When the Environmental Protection Agency’s financial participation in a smear campaign against Washington state farmers was discovered, not a single member of that state’s congressional delegation spoke up.

Even more interestingly, the only two members of Congress to voice their concerns about the propriety of nearly \$600,000 in federal money going toward a public-relations attack on farmers were from the Midwest.

“We are troubled to learn that EPA’s financial assistance appears to improperly fund an advocacy campaign in Washington state that unfairly targets and demonizes farmers and ranchers,” wrote Kansas Sen. Pat Roberts and Oklahoma Sen. Jim Inhofe.

“This disturbing billboard is a bold example of exactly what America’s farmers and ranchers complain about all the time: the EPA has an agenda antagonistic to producers,” Roberts said in a separate statement.

One would think that members of Congress from Washington state would be leading the charge to stop such shenanigans, which were fronted by a coalition of environmental groups and the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission called What’s Upstream and funded by the EPA.

Here’s the statement Washington Sens. Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray issued about the billboards, website and advertising: (Nothing).

We’re not picking on Washington’s two senators. The rest of the congressional delegation was silent on the issue, too.

We have to wonder what their reaction would be if the EPA spent tax dollars to attack Boeing or Microsoft. Most likely, the senators and representatives would have the EPA administrator on the phone right now.

Maybe we missed their outrage, but we can only presume members of Washington’s congressional delegation were too busy elsewhere to allow themselves to be distracted by a federal agency using taxpayer money to attack Washington farmers in an effort to influence Congress and the state legislature.

Maybe that’s the way of the world. When election time comes around, the politicians pat farmers and ranchers on the head — and ask them for campaign contributions — but when the going gets tough, well, there are often other “more important” things to do.

With a few isolated exceptions, we see it in Oregon and California, too. Agriculture is too often forced to sit in the back of the bus. Only in Idaho do members of Congress seem to consistently keep their eye on agriculture’s interests.

Some say Roberts and Inhofe, both Republicans, are just using the What’s Upstream boondoggle to take a potshot at a high-profile agency in a Democratic administration. They see it as a “R versus D” issue — Republican versus Democrat.

We see it differently. We see it is an “R versus W” issue — Right versus Wrong.

And apparently, any fair-minded person who’s taken the time to look at the issue agrees with us.

We urge West Coast members of Congress to step up their efforts to protect farmers and ranchers from the EPA and other overzealous federal agencies that use taxpayer money to try to put them out of business.

If they need a list of those agencies, we can provide one.



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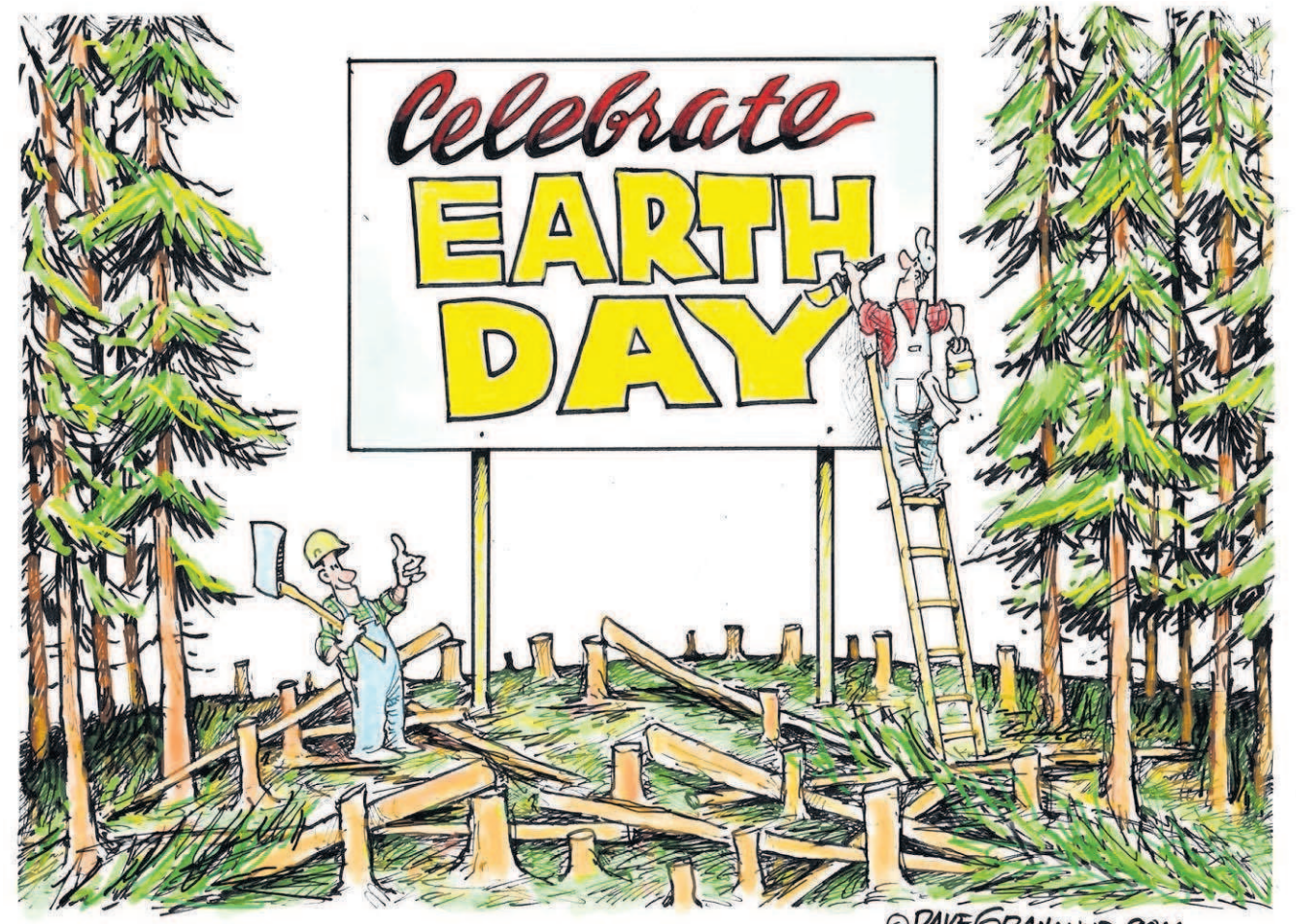
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Rural white women face declining lifespans

Middle-aged white women in places like Eastern Oregon are dying long before they should — a reversal in decades of improving life expectancy in the U.S.

Delving into government and academic data, The Washington Post recently published a deeply troubling look at how addictions, depression and other factors cut decades from the lifespans of women, especially in America’s countryside and small towns.

“From 1990 through 2014, the mortality rate for white women rose in most parts of the country, particularly around small cities and in rural areas. Rates often went up by more than 40 percent and, in some places, doubled,” the Post reported.

Much of Eastern Oregon is in the worst quartile of excess death rates — above 40 percent. East of the Cascades, only Deschutes County has seen declining death rates in the past two decades.

GUEST EDITORIAL

From the Daily Astorian

According to the Post, for every 100,000 women in their late 40s living in U.S. rural areas, 228 died in the year 2000. “Today, 296 are dying,” the Post reports. “And in rural areas, the uptick in mortality was noticeable even earlier, as far back as 1990. Since then, death rates for rural white women in midlife have risen by nearly 50 percent.”

This “corrosion of American health” is driven by several factors, chief among these being rising rates of opioid and heroin addiction, alcoholism and related diseases like cirrhosis of the liver, suicide, smoking and obesity. The suicide rate has more than doubled for rural white women

ages 50 to 54, for example.

These deaths of all varieties are an end result of unique downward spirals of illness, often tied to poverty and absence of much to feel optimistic about. “There are millions of people underneath these (death statistics) who are in pain,” one expert said.

Separate research published recently in The Journal of the American Medical Association finds a stronger-than-ever connection between low incomes and unhealthy lifestyle choices when it comes to living longer. This research discovered that local attitudes and policy choices can have a substantial positive impact.

The infamous “Rural-Urban Divide” sometimes only seems like a rhetorical tool ginned up by the political hate-meisters of talk radio. However, there is legitimate pain on America’s back roads. Attention must be paid.

A deal’s a deal when it comes to wolves

My Dad was odd in some ways. I never heard him cuss, he didn’t drink, never smoked a cigarette and never lied. He did, however, really appreciate a good looking woman, the only thing I might have inherited from him. This was a personal code he had, not because he was afraid of going to hell or because he had any deep religious convictions.

As far as I know he never attended any church and never talked about religion to anyone I remember. Your word and a handshake sealed a deal and was honored more than any contract would be. This was how things were done in ranch country and to a great extent still are. The biggest deal I ever made was on a handshake. For this reason ranchers are often naive in that they continue to take someone’s word as their bond.

Oregon’s wolf plan was a deal agreed to by environmentalists and ranchers. The problem has been that whenever the plan was followed and a rogue pack was supposed to be dispatched, the environmentalists sued and stopped the whole thing.

The recent elimination of part of the rogue Imnaha pack has probably saved a lot of wolves’ lives. This is the pack that continuously killed domestic livestock on both public and private land and trained their pups to do the same. The reason I think it will save wolves lives



OPEN RANGE

Barrie Qualle

is that the ranchers have tried to follow the wolf plan at great personal expense. When the environmentalists go back on the deal by suing to stop the agreed upon enforcement, the ranchers’ frustration level soars.

Ranchers have shown considerable restraint so far. That will not last if the other side continues to go back on the deal. You cannot expect someone to continue to adhere to their obligations if the other side never does. I would predict that if this time the plan had not been followed, open season on wolves would have followed.

In the past few years cowboying on the Zumwalt I have personally seen eight wolves within rifle range. It would have been simple to dispatch any of them and the likelihood of my being caught are practically nil. Most people have no idea how big and lonesome that country is. You can ride around all day and never see anyone other than the occasional aircraft.

I would give anyone 100-1 odds that any rancher that is a little careful could kill a wolf and get away with it. For this

reason I think environmentalists should reconsider their adversarial position and instead court the good will of the ranchers and maybe save some wolves’ lives. A good start would be to spend their seemingly unlimited funds paying for depredation instead of trying to run some pretty honest and decent people out of business and using it to lobby their agenda. Any other group that imported a pest to destroy an industry and people’s livelihood would be sued and probably lose.

I wonder if environmentalists have ever considered changing the wolf plan in some ways. If, for instance, they agreed to pay for all depredation unless they could prove it definitely was not a wolf kill instead of the rancher having to prove it was. Probably the best change would be that if an area was declared wolf habitat, any depredation or missing cattle there would be considered a wolf kill. If a rancher’s cows’ conception rate or body score drops he should be compensated appropriately.

These changes would bring a lot of good will to the range, be a lot cheaper than fighting and save a lot of wolves’ lives. If on the other hand the wolf lovers just want to fight, they may lose what they are trying to save.

Columnist Barrie Qualle is a working cowboy in Wallowa County.

Who would steal a cake?

Imagine my surprise when I went out to my front porch to retrieve my 9-inch by 13-inch Pyrex cake dish that was secure under the lid from my very large ice chest. The dish held a chocolate cake intended for the social hour after Joseph United Church service.

The cake was gone! Who would do such a thing?

Shame, shame on you. If you want to make amends, write a \$20 check to Jo-

LETTERS to the EDITOR

soph United Methodist Church, put it in an envelope addressed to me and put it in my mailbox.

P.S. The frosting was wonderful coconut-pecan.

Sharon Sherlock
Enterprise

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