

Feds are running out of half measures

During the decade that U.S. District Court Judge James Redden rejected Pacific Northwest salmon-restoration plans, detractors quietly pushed the view that he had become an “activist” judge, blinded by personal opinions.

Last week, a judge new to the case — Michael H. Simon of Portland — ruled on the U.S. government’s latest Northwest salmon plan. If anything, Simon was even less impressed with arguments by NOAA Fisheries, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation, which claim they are doing enough to stave off extinction for 13 iconic endangered and threatened salmon and steelhead runs.

EDITORIAL
Voice of the Chieftain

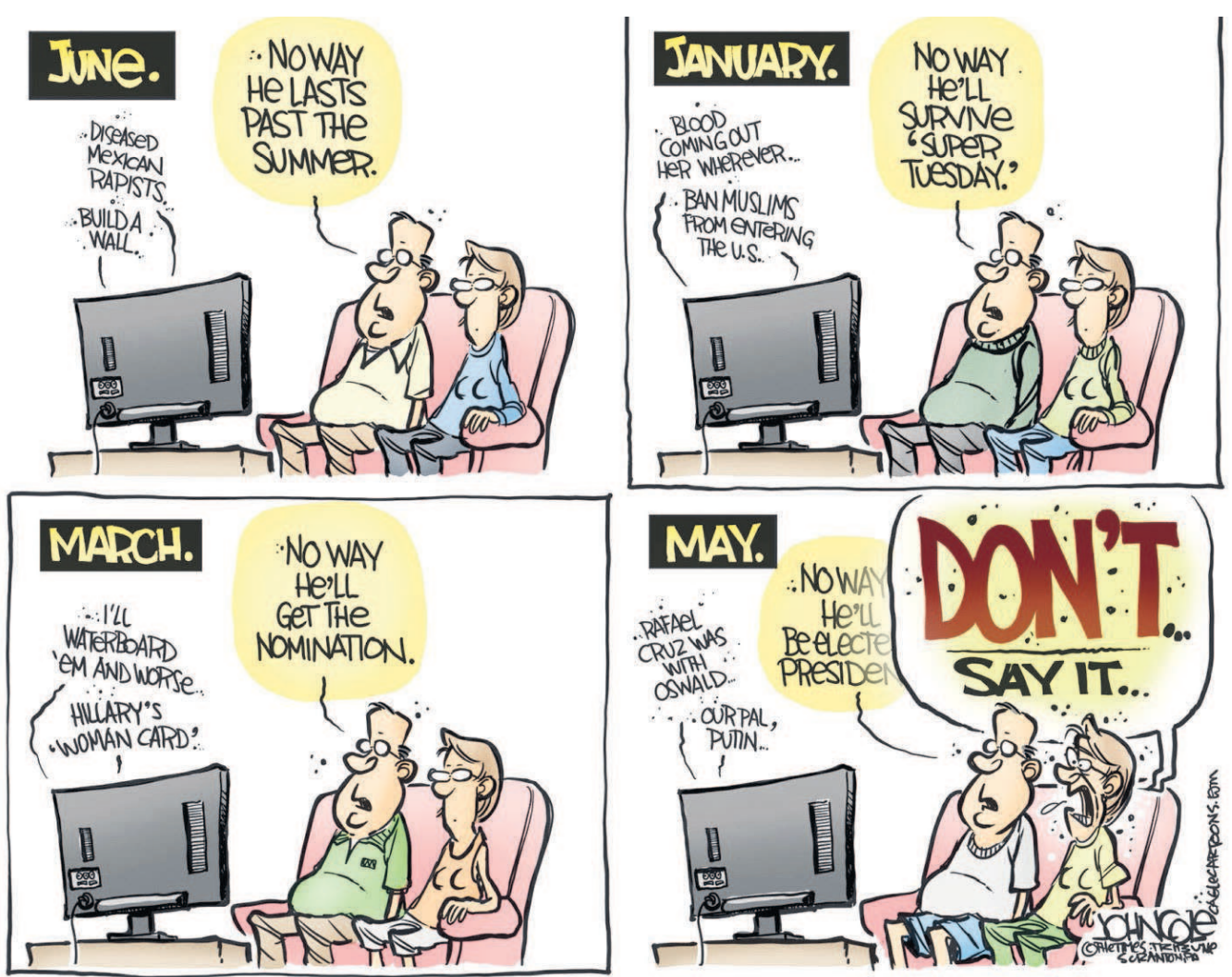
Fishing groups and conservation organizations say the government is contorting the plain meaning of the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, doing all they can to avoid confronting the “original sin” of erecting four major dams across the Snake River, the major tributary of the Columbia.

The agencies have undertaken valuable habitat-restoration projects in the Columbia estuary and upriver — basically trying to do all they can for salmon, short of major modifications to the hydro system. The Columbia is healthier thanks to the agencies, taxpayers and electric ratepayers. Restoring and protecting tidal wetlands, controlling pollution, dramatically increasing research and the level of monitoring of river conditions, controlling predation and other steps are all worthwhile. These efforts, sometimes coupled with favorable ocean conditions, have produced some decent salmon runs in recent years. But a run considered excellent in these times would have been viewed as disastrous in the pre-dam era. This year’s predicted dismal coho returns demonstrate the fragility of any recovery in current salmon populations.

Taking out the Snake River dams — or lesser actions like bypassing one or more, or drastically increasing the quantity of water spilled from them to mimic natural-flow conditions — is politically difficult. Even environmentally minded Democratic politicians are loath to offend powerful economic interests lined up to defend dams. But the judge is right to suggest dam breaching as perhaps the only way to actually obey the clear mandates of the Endangered Species Act.

Salmon face mounting existential challenges. The judge ruled the agencies’ plan fails to acknowledge catastrophic impacts they may face from climate change. Officials are on thin ice legally when they assert salmon are “trending toward recovery” when actual salmon returns fail to show a sustainable recovery, the judge said.

Simon’s ruling — though stopping short of imposing an action plan — is one more in a long series of repudiations of half-measures. Federal agencies and Congress are fast-approaching a time of reckoning when it comes to ensuring salmon survival.



Helping law enforcement help victims in an emergency

On Dec. 1, 2013, Kari Rene Hunt was brutally murdered by her estranged husband in the bathroom of a motel room in Marshall, Texas. Her three children listened through the door as she was stabbed repeatedly. Kari screamed to her 9-year-old daughter to “call 911.” The girl did as instructed, frantically dialing 911 four times. But each time, she heard static on the other end of the line. What she didn’t know is that, because of the way the motel’s phone system was set up, she had to dial “9” first to reach an outside line. She told her grandfather later, “I tried, but it wouldn’t work, Papa.”

On June 2, 2007 — just days after her high school graduation — Kelsey Smith went to a Target store in Kansas to buy a present for her boyfriend. She was abducted from the parking lot in broad daylight, and law enforcement began a massive search. They were unsuccessful for four days until her cellphone’s location information was turned over to law enforcement. Kelsey’s body was then found in about 45 minutes.

The House Communications and Technology panel, which I chair, heard these stories recently from the parents of both the slain young women. No family should have to face situations like these. And they were made worse by a confusing patchwork of laws that govern telephone and communications systems in this country.



GUEST COLUMN
Rep. Greg Walden

If the laws were different at the time, is it possible that Kari Hunt and Kelsey Smith would be alive today? Perhaps. That’s why I’m helping to lead an effort in the U.S. Congress to pass two bills to ensure that law enforcement can help victims faster in an emergency situation, when time is precious.

One proposal, known as “Kari’s Law,” would require that all multi-line telephone systems, typically found in hotels, offices and schools, be configured to reach 911 without any additional prefix. After all, children are taught from a very young age to simply dial 911 in an emergency, not 9911 or 7911 or anything else. This fix would be both easy and inexpensive. Many hotels around the country have made progress addressing this problem, but we need a uniform, national standard to make sure what happened to Kari Hunt and her family never happens again. It’s been said that you may only dial 911 once in your life, but that time will be the most important call you ever make. We should make sure it’s as easy as possible so you can get the

help you need when seconds count.

Another proposal, known as the “Kelsey Smith Act,” would give law enforcement the tools to locate victims in emergencies by using location data from their cellphone providers. By creating a narrow set of circumstances in which law enforcement can access this type of data, the bill seeks to protect the privacy of users while still allowing access for law enforcement when the situation demands it. The Kelsey Smith Act already is the law in 22 states, including right here in Oregon where it was approved by the Legislature unanimously in 2014. The federal bill would take the Oregon standard and apply it nationwide. It’s just common sense.

Both these proposals recently were approved unanimously by the Communications and Technology panel I chair, as well as the full Energy and Commerce Committee. The next step is a vote in the full U.S. House of Representatives, which I hope will take action soon. These plans would save lives using existing technology and don’t cost taxpayers a dime. It’s time they become law so that what happened to the families of Kari Hunt and Kelsey Smith never happens to another American family again.

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden represents Oregon’s Second Congressional District, which covers 20 counties in southern, central and eastern Oregon.

Pro-wolf letter off target

In response to Wally Sykes’ (April 30) letter, I sadly always seem compelled to correct his untruths. He mentions public grazing — actually, that is the bullet point for all the pro-wolf people and groups — but what he fails to mention is that the highest percentage of wolf kills here in Oregon have occurred on private ground, many very close to our homes.

What he also fails to mention is that the Imnaha Pack was slated, as per the Oregon Wolf Plan, to be taken out because of repeated livestock kills.

He also fails to mention that this same pack was killing sheep and cattle almost daily toward the end, and yes, again on private property. And where were they put down? On private property.

My husband and I had the chance to kill a wolf on our private property and didn’t because we hoped that the Oregon Wolf Plan would be followed. I have said all along — and what I believe Barry was alluding to — that pro-wolf people have put the wolf in more danger by not following their own rules. I think what it comes down to is this: if they don’t follow the rules, why should we?

Ramona Phillips
Joseph

Editor’s note: ODFW says the four Wallowa County wolves killed on March 31 were a splinter group from the Imnaha Pack. The entire pack has not been slated “to be taken out.”

Won’t vote for Trump

After what seems a never ending election cycle, it is now Oregon’s turn to vote. For the last several elections it has been said that “this is the most important election our lifetime,” and this year it’s more true than ever.

At the beginning of the primary season the Republicans provided a candidate field of great depth, albeit much too large.

We’ve watched one after another suspend campaigns leaving two major contenders, along with debris from the ugliness of this year’s process. Zealots in each campaign are still energized but the mean,

LETTERS to the EDITOR

7th-grade mentality has left way too many disgusted. While it was hoped to hear policy and principle discussions, we have witnessed bullying, personal attacks and bait-and-switch deceptions.

With all the raucousness of the internet wars, the bias of a media valuing profit over fact, the truth is that the consequences of this vote are so important that the America I have grown up knowing hangs in the balance.

Anger and frustration, it is said, fuel Trump’s candidacy. I’m angry and quite frustrated with what has happened over the last eight years.

Everyone agrees that Trump has tapped into that anger and has great campaign slogans. Being an effective president requires more than arousing large crowds (I still see Obama standing in front of Greek columns).

To be a president who navigates America out of these turbulent times requires many skills and character traits such as trust, honesty, faithfulness. Trump has a recorded history of lacking these. Also lacking is any history of conservative convictions.

Like most conservatives in the last two election cycles, I held my nose voting for McCain and Romney. Please consider very carefully when voting; a Trump nomination ensures a Hillary presidency. For like thousands of rock-solid conservatives across the country, I will NOT vote Trump in November.

Annette Lathrop
Joseph

Editor’s note: This letter was submitted prior to GOP candidates Ted Cruz and John Kasich suspending their campaigns.

Wolfe for commissioner

Being born and raised in Wallowa I have known Stephen (Steve) Wolfe and his family all my life. My friendship with Steve has proven that his honesty and integrity is beyond reproach. I feel that he

will be a great asset to the folks in Wallowa County as their county commissioner.

Duane Berry
Imbler

No debate in HD 58

Have you ever written in a candidate for an election? It takes a little effort and a bit more motivation. Let me encourage you to prove the pen (or pencil) can be mighty. Let’s look at House District 58.

There’s no Independent or Democrat running for Oregon House District 58. This means there’s no debate on important issues that will be brought to — and fought over — in Salem. So while we all say there’s not enough of a connection with the west side of the state and we lose any influence over metro areas, we’re almost disconnecting ourselves “over here” without a real chance to be fully represented “over there.”

In 2012 the incumbent misrepresented what his opponent said about immigration. It’ll be a shame not to have, for example, an honest discussion about what’s happened since 2012. Instead, allowing the incumbent to simply walk back into office sends the wrong message, from crucial issues of immigration, to economics and even health care.

I encourage everyone who gets a blank line on their ballot for House District 58 to write in my name, Jack Howard, for the 58th Legislative District. Send a message that everyone in Eastern Oregon counts. My work as a county commissioner is based on my past experience. As an attorney, I have worked with leaders in Washington, California and in issues of local poverty and building business opportunity for everyone and not the few. As your neighbor, I’ll continue to believe trust is not a fleeting thing. Earned trust is often the only thing that sees us through the hardest tests.

You can find more about me on Facebook. I hope I’ll find my name written on your ballot. Again, that’s House District 58: it’ll be our agreement to listen, and a new way to succeed in Salem.

Jack Howard
La Grande



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Volume 134