

Shortfalls crippling rural counties

Across the West, rural counties, school districts and local governments that once depended on natural resources such as timber have been slowly sinking into a sea of red ink.

The problem: State and federal land managers have unilaterally changed the rules of how natural resources are managed.

The result has been less economic activity such as logging, leading to ever-tighter local budgets. Those local governments and school districts once shared the revenue from timber cut on public lands. Now they receive only a small fraction of what they previously received.

Those who defend the change in resource management say those counties and school districts should just pass special tax levies to cover the shortfalls. Such statements reflect their ignorance about the economy of the rural West. If logging is the primary economic activity and it is curtailed, then a tax levy will not cover the shortfall. People collecting unemployment insurance cannot afford higher tax bills.

This argument is playing out in a courtroom in Albany where Linn County officials are suing the state for \$1.4 billion they and 14 other counties have been shorted since 1998.

According to Linn County’s lawyers, that’s the year the state changed the way it manages Forest Trust Lands. The counties gave those timber lands to the state to manage on their behalf.

Under the change, instead of managing the timber to produce revenue, the state decided to manage it for other objectives — without the counties’ consent.

During a hearing in July, the state’s lawyers essentially tried to duck the question of whether the state owes the counties any money. They talked about “greatest permanent value” and that the statute doesn’t require “revenue maximization.”

What they didn’t argue is whether the state has a moral and ethical obligation to manage those lands in a way that doesn’t leave the counties and school districts broke.

It should be noted that across the West, the federal government has also done its best to squeeze natural resource companies out of business. In many rural areas, where once a thriving timber industry existed, there remains only abandoned mills or a mill operating at a fraction of its capacity. The only mills that remain profitable are those that own timber and don’t depend entirely on government timber sales.

This is a direct result of federal managers — Uncle Sam owns most of the land in the West — deciding to shut down or vastly reduce logging in many areas.

With the state of Oregon managing timber land for “greatest permanent value” and the federal managers tightening the timber supply, rural counties and school districts have suffered financially.

Instead of ducking this lawsuit, we’d like to see the state’s lawyers argue in open court that precious few bigwigs in state government care one bit about rural communities. We want them to argue that the trees — a renewable resource — are more precious than rural economies. We want them to tell the judge that it’s more important to the state of Oregon to protect as many trees as its managers see fit, no matter the impact on rural Oregonians.

Of course, they won’t say that outright, but that’s what they mean.

EDITORIAL

From the East Oregonian



It’s rodeo time in the PNW

Another Chief Joseph Days Rodeo is in the bag and a good one it was. The stands were full every night and I think the Friday and Saturday performances were sold out.

Like a lot of people in the county, I had friends staying with me for the occasion — kids of friends from California. The four of them were entered in the team roping and got out of here with about \$2,000 apiece. Not surprising since two of them, the Hirdes boys, were the grandsons of Les Hirdes, a former world champion, and the sons of a several time NFR qualifier, Ed Hirdes. They arrived Wednesday from a rodeo in Utah and roped in slack and the perf and were on their way Thursday morning to a rodeo in eastern Idaho. So far the trip had gone well. That is not always the case.

Have you ever noticed that the fuel gauge on your truck doesn’t move off of full until you have burned a quarter tank and doesn’t reach three-fourths full until you are really down to half full?

About 25 years ago I left Oakdale, Calif., with three other cowboys headed for the Caldwell Night rodeo. I was with Leo and Jerold Camarillo — both world champions multiple times — and Jim Wheatley, who has qualified for the NFR on several occasions, and there wasn’t room for my ego in the cab of the pickup. It was plumb full. The three were full of opinions and though they might not always be right, they were never in doubt.

We arrived at Fernly, Nev., around 11 a.m. and fueled up. After lunch at Ormachias in Winnemucca, it was on to Caldwell. The next day the Camarillos were on to another rodeo with someone else and



OPEN RANGE

Barrie Qualle

Jim and I were headed back to Oakdale.

Before we left Jerold took the pick-up and fueled it up for us. Right after we passed through Winnemucca I took a nap and when I woke I looked at the fuel gauge and told Jim we better fuel up in Lovelock.

Lovelock was half an hour ago, he replied.

He thought that since we made it from Fernley to Caldwell on a full tank we should be able to make the return trip on a tank. Pretty soon the warning light came on and about 35 miles short of Fernley the diesel ran out.

Jim is useless in these kind of situations. I flagged down a van that some guy with a wheelchair was driving and had him drop me off in Fernley at a truck stop. I thanked him and he smiled and said that we all need to help others sometimes. I smiled and promised to stop parking in the handicapped zones. I bought a 5 gallon jug and filled it with diesel and wondered how long it would take me to get a ride back.

I was just about to start walking back to I-80 when I spotted a familiar face. A woman who drove a cattle truck and had hauled for a ranch I worked for was heading toward her rig. I even remembered her name and asked her where she was headed. She had loaded out that morning in Sierraville and was headed for Colorado. For you who are geographically challenged, that was the right direction. I

jumped in with her and 35 miles later we arrived at the scene of the fuel deprivation. Cindy said she would wait to see that we got going before she left.

Jim was reading the “Rodeo Sports News” instead of the Dodge manual chapter on how to restart a diesel when you run it out of fuel. We put the five gallons in the tank and it wouldn’t start. Before Jim ran the battery completely down I stopped him and read the manual. It said that there was a primer pump that needed to be pumped 25 times and then to try the starter.

Now, Jim and I both would rather be dipped in cow crap than get a drop of oil or grease on us. Not very mechanical. We figured out how to open the hood and started to follow fuel lines to find the primer pump. We were not successful. About then Cindy got tired of waiting and came across the median to see what was taking so long. We told her we had traced the fuel lines but were unsuccessful in finding the primer. Cindy took a look and identified the fuel lines we had been tracing as air conditioning lines. In about half a minute she located the primer and started the pumping. Jim hit the starter and we hugged Cindy and away we all went.

Jim couldn’t figure out why we couldn’t make the return trip with two fewer horses when we made it on one tank the other way. Knowing Jerold I am pretty sure he kept his eye on the gauge as he was filling up in Caldwell and as soon as it read full, which would be about three-quarters full, he quit pumping. You have to watch those rodeo cowboys, especially the ones from that era.

Columnist Barrie Qualle is a working cowboy in Wallowa County.

A way forward for Oregon, U.S.

As I listen to people during meetings throughout our state (I recently held my 51st town hall since the beginning of last year), Oregonians too often voice the same concerns: an overreaching federal government that ignores our pleas, overregulates our lives and depresses job growth in our communities.

That’s why I put forward legislation that positively addresses the problems we face. Seven of my proposals have passed the U.S. House so far this term — most with unanimous support — including my bills to help bring commercial air service back to Klamath Falls, provide needed funding for bridges in the Columbia Gorge, and to improve rural internet service for consumers.

Within the past year, Congress has given law enforcement and drug prevention advocates new tools to help fight addiction in our communities. We’ve passed plans to help veterans get better health care in the communities where they live. Seniors no longer face a planned drastic spike in Medicare premiums or a cut for Social Security disability recipients. A long-term transportation funding plan and a major education reform proposal have also be-



GUEST COLUMN

Rep. Greg Walden

come law.

While I’m proud of these successes, there is still much to be done to push back against an overreaching federal government. That’s why House Republicans have proposed a new agenda — called “A Better Way” — to offer solutions to some of the biggest challenges we face in Oregon and America. Some highlights of our plan include:

Growing jobs and the economy: Too many small businesses, farmers and ranchers in Oregon face overbearing federal regulations that are often written by agencies far away in Washington, D.C. Last year alone, federal regulations cost the national economy about \$1.89 trillion in lost growth and productivity. Our plan makes sure the regulatory regime works for us — not against us. For instance, we’d require that the Congress, accountable to

the people, approve all major regulations. Our plan also would help boost affordable, reliable energy and preserve internet innovation so that jobs can flourish.

Combating poverty: 50 years ago, the U.S. government launched the “War on Poverty.” American taxpayers have invested \$22 trillion since then, yet you are just as likely to stay poor if you were born poor today as you were then. And according to a state report last year, Oregon’s poverty rate is higher than the national average (and the rate is even higher in many rural counties). The current system too often replaces work, instead of encouraging it. There’s a better way to help the over 46 million Americans who are trapped in a cycle of poverty. Our plan offers solutions to expand opportunity and reward work.

Implementing real health reform: The new health care law, known as Obamacare, is driving up insurance costs and reducing choices for too many Oregonians. The state wasted hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars on Cover Oregon and now is mired in costly litigation.

See WALDEN, Page A5

Don’t downplay ag’s role in county

Katie Jo Morgan’s Aug. 3 letter to the editor should have rebuttal letters pouring in; not concerning Wallowa County’s housing issues, but to question and correct her claim that tourism is the area’s top industry, followed at a distance by the arts and entertainment.”

Not even an honorable mention for the true top industry, agriculture.

Agriculture — or the Natural Resource Sector, which includes timber receipts — is by far the largest the overall contributor to Wallowa County’s economy. In 2014 the county’s agriculture revenue was \$60 million. A little over half that amount was generated by cattle sales, with timber, hay and grain earnings

LETTERS to the EDITOR

rounding out the balance.

This information was obtained via a personal communication with Wallowa County’s Oregon State University Extension agent. The Natural Resource Sector report for 2015 is not fully compiled yet, but we may safely assume the revenue figures will continue to keep agriculture exactly where it has always been; the highest earning industry in Wallowa County.

If we accept Ms. Morgan’s statement that Wallowa County was the recipient

of \$27.6 million of tourists’ money, we would have to believe that \$75,616 per day, 365 days per year, was generated by tourism. In a county where a generous tourist season runs from Memorial Day through October’s hunting seasons, approximately 150 days, the number would balloon into the neighborhood of \$184,000 per day. The county motel/hotel tax revenue does not support either figure.

While tourism money does figure into Wallowa County income, it is important to accurately recognize Wallowa County’s top earning power: agriculture.

Kerry Tienhaara
Joseph

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN

USPS No. 665-100

P.O. Box 338 • Enterprise, OR 97828

Office: 209 NW First St., Enterprise, Ore.

Phone: 541-426-4567 • Fax: 541-426-3921

Wallowa County’s Newspaper Since 1884

Enterprise, Oregon

MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHER

EDITOR

REPORTER

REPORTER

NEWSROOM ASSISTANT

AD SALES CONSULTANT

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

OFFICE MANAGER

Marissa Williams, marissa@bmeagle.com

Scot Heisel, editor@wallowa.com

Stephen Tool, stool@wallowa.com

Kathleen Ellyn, kellyn@wallowa.com

editor@wallowa.com

Jennifer Powell, jpowell@wallowa.com

Robby Day, rday@wallowa.com

Cheryl Jenkins, cjenkins@wallowa.com

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY BY:

EO Media Group

Periodical Postage Paid at Enterprise and additional mailing offices

Subscription rates (includes online access)

Wallowa County

Out-of-County

1 Year

\$40.00

\$57.00

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

See the Wallowa County Chieftain on the Internet

www.wallowa.com

facebook.com/Wallowa | twitter.com/wcchieftain

POSTMASTER — Send address changes to

Wallowa County Chieftain

P.O. Box 338

Enterprise, OR 97828

Contents copyright © 2016. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.