

# Lostine project helps ‘bend the climate curve’

With smoke enveloping Wallowa County and the governor declaring another wildfire state of emergency, we need fresh perspective on forestry and forest management. The forests of eastern Oregon have been dramatically modified by human activity since the late 1800s. These changes have reduced forest resiliency to wildfire, insects and disease — and climate change is amplifying these threats.

Scientists largely agree that we can do something about this. Over the past 30 years, research and new management strategies have broadened our understanding of forest systems, and how to manage for resilience. The effectiveness of fuel reduction treatments to reduce wildfire severity is one example.



**GUEST COLUMN**

Nils Christofferson

While we lacked conclusive evidence 10 years ago, the scientific literature has expanded significantly. Numerous reviews of this evidence conclude the same thing — that fuel reduction treatments reduce wildfire severity in mixed-conifer forests if they treat surface fuels (especially by prescribed burning), retain the larger fire resistant trees and open the canopy.

The interaction of stand conditions, fuel loads, plant succession and climate are complex. Thinning does affect fire lengths and rates of spread in drier fine fuels below a restoration treatment. But the overall effect remains a reduction in wildfire severity since fuel loads and connectivity are reduced.

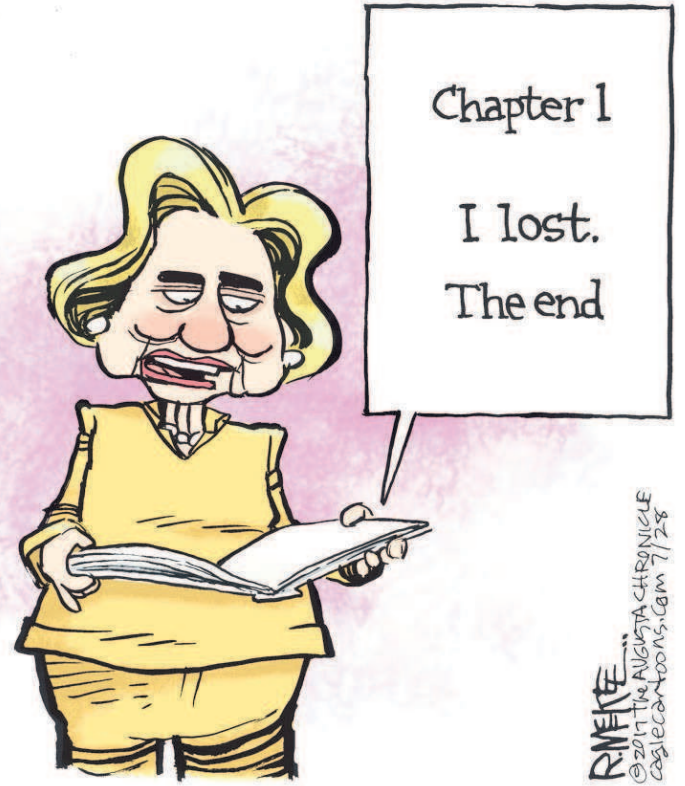
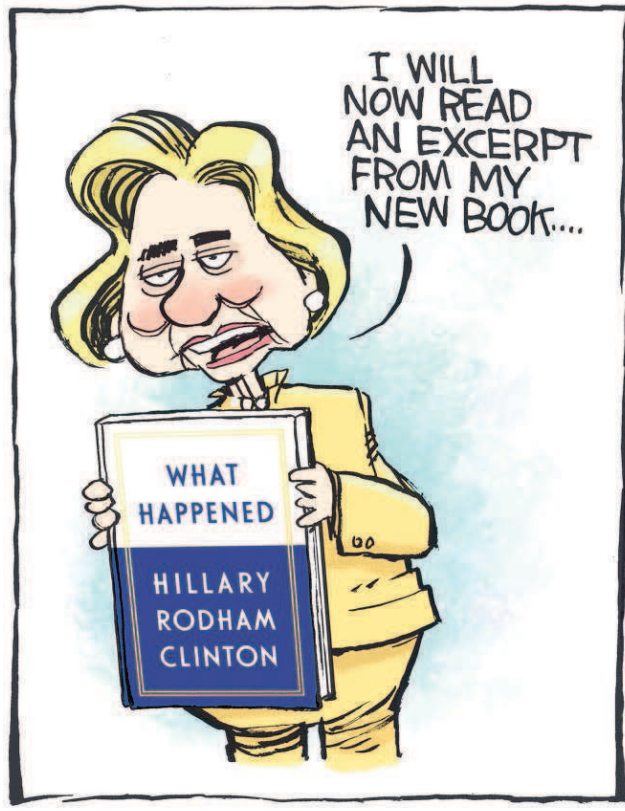
Properly implemented fuel reduction treatments result in more low severity fires running through the understory and fewer high severity stand-replacing fires. The reduction in stand density, and increased air flow, also mitigates insect infestations. These are all good restoration outcomes.

The Union of Concerned Scientists, a nonprofit science advocacy group, agrees. They identified eastern Oregon as an area where management actions can help “bend the climate curve” away from the potential for complete forest loss. Analysis published in 2016 calls for fuel treatments to prevent crown fires and thinning to reduce insect mortality, and for Congress and the public to give forest managers greater flexibility to achieve long-term forest health goals.

The Wallowa Whitman National Forest has recently signed two project decisions that incorporate these recommendations in their design: the Lower Joseph Creek Restoration Project and the Lostine Corridor Public Safety Project. While differing in their primary purpose, both projects are based on an improved knowledge of forest ecosystems, and fire behavior.

Both highlight the profound shift from a more open and diverse forest landscape a century ago to a denser more homogeneous forest landscape today. These changes are well documented by ecological historians, comparative photos and recent stand exams. And they both advance new approaches to forest management designed to restore forest resiliency, as well as provide the structure, species composition and landscape patterns important to wildlife conservation including old growth protection and restoration.

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# Drugs and cowboys not a good mix

Just wrapped up a great week. Chief Joseph Days rodeo and a house full of people. My grandkids have been threatening to come for a visit and followed through on the threat.

Three beautiful girls, one 17 and two 18 and one boy 17 with his friend. This was their first rodeo, and they didn’t miss a performance. As if having five teenagers around wasn’t enough, I got a call from a cowboy from California wanting a place to stay for him, three other cowboys and four horses.

Young girls and rodeo cowboys, what could go wrong? Having nine extras made things busy, but we all had a ball. I wisely refrained from telling my two sons and daughter their children would be bunking with four rodeo cowboys guessing they would veto the whole trip. Everything worked out, and two of the cowboys placed in the team roping, winning almost \$1,600 each. The cowboys left for other rodeos on Thursday giving my wife time off from monitoring the girls.

I have always thought that if you can raise your kids without them making some irreversible mistake, you have done a good job. There are two things that do worry me about young people — drugs and texting while driving. These are things I never had to deal with when I was young.

There were no drugs around, and you were lucky if to have had a land line. If you did talk on the phone, there was usually a parent around eavesdropping on the



**OPEN RANGE**

Barrie Qualle

conversation. While the cowboys were here, we discussed drugs and why a few of the PRCA cowboys we knew had succumbed to dabbling in them. Some of them to the point their rodeo careers languished and died.

When I asked them why those guys had gone down the wrong road, they agreed it was too much down time between rodeos, and if you won, you celebrated. If you lost you took drugs to feel better. All agreed this was a lame excuse.

Marijuana, now legal, is thought to be a harmless drug. Maybe for some people; however, we discussed a cowboy we all knew that smokes a lot of weed, and now that’s all he does. He could rope with the best of them. His dad supplied him with good horses, and his mother supplied airline tickets, a credit card and a new pickup with a Bloomer living quarters trailer.

He went to the finals several times and was always in the top 15. He lost interest in all this and now sparks one up for breakfast and then stays with it. I guess staying high is one way to get through the day. Helps you forget you accomplished nothing yesterday, and today doesn’t show much promise either. Kind of a shame

though. The Stock Growers Ranch Rodeo is Aug. 19 at the fairgrounds arena. This is a chance for everyone to watch local cowboys compete in several ranch type events. I encourage all to attend for a great time.

I am pleased to see so many ranch cowboys enter these events. I found that by competing, I sharpened my roping skills and horsemanship. When you compete, you are not just completing a task, your focus is sharpened and you try to do things more accurately and quickly.

Your horsemanship becomes increasingly important, and the horse you ride and the training you have put into him are critical. Competition forces improvement, if you have any interest in winning.

When practicing events like team roping, it is necessary to make every run count. One or two aspects of each run should be worked on, and every run should have a purpose. Otherwise you are just making dust.

Once again Fred Steen’s timed event crew at Chief Joseph Day has won the coveted award of prettiest crew. Thanks to Abby, Rya, Hannah and Brianna. Hard to believe girls this pretty can be so handy. Dan Ackley and all the rodeo judges totally appreciate their hard work. Fred does know how to audition for talent.

Barrie Qualle is an all-around working ranch hand, author and ranch rodeo enthusiast. He lives in Wallowa County.

# We need to capture the ‘Dunkirk’ spirit

If you go to see the movie “Dunkirk” — and I hope you will — please pay particularly close attention to one of the closing scenes in which the role of the local hometown community newspaper is highlighted. I won’t say too much more, not wanting to be a spoiler.

Several reviewers have opined that you will need to see the movie at least twice to unravel director Christopher Nolan’s time-twisting technique. It occasionally gets in the way of the storytelling. And his characters aren’t well-developed.

I am as much a fan of avant-garde as anyone, but there comes a point where you just want to stand up and yell at the screen because you have no idea what’s going on.

I couldn’t help but note that the spirit of “Dunkirk” is something that’s sorely missing in our country today. We could use a little more working together and uniting behind a noble cause rather than spitting, fussing and fuming.

Can you image capturing a “Dunkirk” moment and applying it to a major national crisis like health insurance and crafting a solution everyone could live with? Now that would be worth the price of admission. I’ll bring the popcorn.

**SHORTLY AFTER I** moved here, I was introduced to Don Swart and his wife,



**WAHL TO WALL**

Paul Wahl

Evelyn. Since Don had been the face of the Chieftain for so many years, I wasn’t sure what to expect. How delighted I have been to find both of them to be a wonderful source of encouragement in my work. They are among a handful who truly understand what it means to bear the responsibility of producing a weekly newspaper.

I especially appreciate Don’s sense of humor. It has long been my theory that in the newspaper business, you either get a sense of humor or check yourself into an institution.

Last week, the Wallowa County Rotary Club presented Don with an award for “Exemplifying the Rotary values of Leadership, Service And Friendship.” I can’t think of anyone more deserving of the accolades.

The story is told of an elderly newspaper publisher who hired a young reporter. The reporter noted a rather odd behavior in his publisher. Every time the train went

by, the publisher would jump up and stand at the door and watch it until it disappeared over the horizon.

One day, the reporter worked up enough gumption to ask what his actions were all about.

“Well,” said the wizened publisher chewing on a cigar, “it’s the only dang thing that goes through in this town without me having to get behind and push it.”

Thanks Don and Evelyn for your friendship and support.

**PLEASE TAKE** the opportunity this week to stop out and catch the action at the Wallowa County Fair at the fairgrounds. There is perhaps nothing more iconic than a county fair and all that goes with it.

It’s somewhat sad that country fairs are on the decline nationwide. It seems the “hand” in the 4-H pledge is rapidly becoming more of a thumb, as in texting and surfing online.

It takes a number of dedicated folks to make the Wallowa version happen each year.

Let’s do all we can to support them, and let them know that the county fair still has a vital role to play in our community. We hope to be out capturing images this week and plan to bring you results as quickly as they become available.

# Use our apex brain in managing wolves, elk

In response to the letter from Garik Asplund on the elk problem, I am quite sure that most people in this county thought your letter was much more laughable than Dallas McCrae’s. Dallas was just more humble in his suggestion.

In case you are not aware, there is already an elk fence in the county, built many moons ago, that does a pretty good job of keeping the elk out of the Prairie Creek area.

The elk were brought in here more than 50 years ago by train and were not native to this area. They have done well, and in the past, we had hunters come in every year who kept those numbers to a reasonable total.

In recent years, as the elk have become more of an issue for ranchers who are raising food for livestock in addition to food for people like you, the powers that be in ODFW have reduced tags, raised the prices and limited hunts to the point that most people think it’s pointless to spend

# LETTERS to the EDITOR

the money to come here and try to take an elk.

They have also raised the objectives of elk numbers in areas, which has made it harder for ranchers to keep sufficient grass for cattle as the elk come in and eat down the new spring grass. Now, you might ask yourself, why would they want fewer elk harvested when the elk are becoming a major issue for ranchers who are having these huge animals, who eat more than a horse, raiding haystacks, tearing down fences, permanently migrating into planted fields and losing their fear of humans?

I’ll save you the trouble of thinking up excuses. They need large game animals to feed the growing wolf population, and if the wolves don’t have game meat, they will prey more on livestock, which means more chaos for ODFW as the wolf-lovers condemn the need to control wolf numbers. Make sense?

You also need to be educated to the fact that the Canadian Gray Wolf is also not a native of Wallowa County. There were a few native timber wolves here in the past who were never an issue with livestock. Those wolves were a different subspecies just like the Mexican wolf is a different subspecies. (That is another misunderstood issue.)

And by the way, as proven in Yellowstone, wolves do not move game around. They did not keep the elk away from streams so little trees could grow. Elk go where they have to so they can find food and survive.

So to your comment about the “oxymoronic pretense of managing elk.” You’re right.

There is no management of elk and no management of wolves at this point. People need to learn that as the apex brain on the planet, we must control animal numbers and sometimes, including this case, that means lethal control for both these species.

Connie Dunham  
Enterprise

**Letters to the Editor** are subject to editing and should be limited to 275 words. Writers should also include a phone number with their signature so we can call to verify identity. The Chieftain does not run anonymous letters.

In terms of content, writers should refrain from personal attacks. It’s acceptable, however, to attack (or support) another party’s ideas.

We do not routinely run thank-you letters, a policy we’ll consider waiving only in unusual situations where reason compels the exception.

You can submit a letter to the Wallowa County Chieftain in person; by mail to P.O. Box 338, Enterprise, OR 97828; by email to editor@wallowa.com; or via the submission form at the newspaper’s website, located at wallowa.com. (Drop down the “Opinion” menu on the navigation bar to see the relevant link).



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