

# Stop the knee-jerk reactions and write good laws

I actually sat and watched most of the Democratic debate this week. The one thing that I took away from it was a Presidential candidate in a national debate, coming right out and saying that he wanted to take away our AR-15's and AK's, and getting a pretty good response. What bothered me the most was the reaction of the people there. They seemed very supportive of this whole idea of giving away their 2nd Amendment rights. I wonder if they really know what they would be giving up.

We are talking about abrogating one of the Amendments to our constitution. This scares the hell out of me. How soon before someone decides that we really don't need the right to free speech? Or that we really don't need a trial and jury of our peers?

For years, candidates have said that we need "common-sense gun laws." I'm still waiting for a common-sense gun law that does not

## A VIEW FROM THE GALLERY

Kim Hutchison

infringe upon our rights. (Infringe – 1. To transgress; violate. 2. To encroach; trespass — American Heritage Dictionary.) The 2nd Amendment is the only one to state "shall not be infringed." This should give you an idea of how much importance our founding fathers placed on this amendment. In its June 26, 2015, decision, a 5-4 majority of the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the 2nd Amendment confers an individual's right to keep and bear arms. In order to remove these rifles legally, they would have to change our constitution and remove the 2nd Amendment. Our Founders deliberately made changing the constitution difficult. That's why we have to have

¾'s of the states ratify a proposed change. Not an easy thing to do.

Our current crop of candidates want to remove these "weapons of war" from our streets, but their understanding of modern rifles seems to be a little limited. AR-15's are semi-automatic rifles. One trigger pull, one round fired. Same with civilian AK's. Neither AR-15's or civilian AK's are assault rifles, nor are they 3-round burst or full auto capable. No country in the world sends their troops into battle with a AR-15 or a civilian model AK. They would get their butts handed to them in a hurry. AR's and AK's can be shot rapidly; rapidly and accurately, that's another story. More people are killed every year with handguns than are killed with rifles of all kinds (FBI Crime Stats).

I understand that we have a violence/mental health problem in our country. However, taking away someone's right to own a weapon because someone else

shot up a store with that kind of weapon is insanity. Ask almost any law enforcement officer and they will tell you that when they run across someone with mental health problems, it's almost impossible to force them to get the help they need. We all know someone that really should not own a weapon, handgun or rifle. That being said, until they are arrested, tried and convicted of a crime they have a constitutional right to bear arms. This brings me to Red Flag Laws.

I've read through Oregon's Red Flag law and I'm not real comfortable with it as it is written. (ORS 166.525-543 in case you would like to read it for yourself, and I recommend that you do. My thanks to Officer Curtis for helping me find it.) I understand why there is a push to remove dangerous weapons from violent or suicidal people. I've also read-up on how this law has been put into effect so far. On many of the cases

I read about, I have to agree with having these people's weapons removed by the court. Most of these people had already committed a crime that would preclude them from owning a weapon. But the idea of taking away a person's rights based on the premise that that a person might commit a crime in the future, makes the hair on my neck stand up.

This drive to preempt crime is treading very close to trampling on all of our rights as citizens of this great nation. This is an area that we need to be very careful when writing laws. After talking with a local representative about the Red Flag Law, I found out just how hard it will be to change or fix a law that is already on the books. So, we need to get it right the first time. A message to all our lawmakers... Stop with the knee-jerk reactions or emotions and write good laws. Not ones that will be overturned the first time they are challenged in court.

# Weighing in on the Lostine River corridor: Nature as we know it is at stake

## OTHER VOICES

John Marshall

As a visitor to Wallowa County for over sixty years, as one who has spent twenty-five years exploring burned forests through photographs, and as a person privileged with many a discussion with the best of experts, I wish to weigh in on what to do for the Lostine River corridor. The situation in the Lostine is serious. Lives are at stake here, so is nature as we know it. After having been absent for many years, when I drove up the Lostine River Road this summer to backpack into the Granite Gulch Fire in the Eagle Cap Wilderness, I was shocked at how thick the forest is. Aerial photos taken in 1956 and 2011 validate my perception. I wonder what it looked like in 1900?

Essentially, by up-ending the ancient rhythms of fire, the Forest Service with good intentions and broad public support, fundamentally changed our forests not just in the Lostine, but everywhere. Historically it was many small fires, and the occasional large ones, followed by partial re-burns that kept fire and insects in check, and underlied the broad spectrum of plants and animals. Instead of avoiding fire, we are now set up to have it in a way that is more destructive than



John F. Marshall

Lostine River at Maxwell Lake Trailhead bridge.

beneficial.

In a period of a couple of days under hot dry windy conditions, the Lostine could literally go from being a thick continuous patch of green to a place with few live trees. Recognizing that hazard, the Forest Service is trying to find a way to interrupt future fire along the narrow strip of road surrounded by Wilderness on both sides. In a way the Forest Service proposal is a half-measure, but it is the best it can do. Unfortunately, one sector of the environmental community, that mistakenly views the Lostine as pristine and does not see the danger has intervened.

The very idea of trees being cut in a much-loved area and logs sent to mills

is the rub. For years the Forest Service had to "get out the cut", with unrealistic targets set by congress. Stumps and scrawny little trees occupy too many places where magnificent ponderosa pines once stood. That logging done intelligently might actually be helpful, even essential to the forest, is a foreign concept to many. The compromise offered by David Mildrexler of Eastern Oregon Legacy Lands of taking only eight inch and smaller trees is not the answer. It does not address the need for gaps and openings where fire might extinguish when relative humidity goes up at night, places where fire would drop to the ground and fire-fighters would have a measure of safety, and

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success.

A commercial logging component is needed not just to restore the forest to an earlier condition, but to fund the work of taking out tens of thousands of small trees that will have to be piled and burned or chewed up by machinery. Protected are any trees larger than 21 inches in diameter. Getting work done on the National Forests these days is tough. Staffing on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest is down by 67% from 1994. The lawsuit and appeals of Oregon Wild, and Greater Hells Canyon Council must have come like a kick in the knee to a weakened agency.

To be clear, following the Forest Service plan for the Lostine does not ensure that the inevitable big fire does not end badly. It does not ensure that every visitor will get out alive, or that every old growth tree survives. What it does is gives the agency a leg-up in being able to fight fire, and improves the odds of survival for man and nature. Cutting openings in the for-

est will provide sunny habitat for everything from bumblebees to elk. An emphasis on retaining the shady nature of the Lostine makes it more likely that the

very thing most cherished will be destroyed.

John F. Marshall is a biologist and photographer whose career includes working with Dr. Paul Hessburg of the University Washington School of Forestry and USFS to document forest conditions and health. Marshall's latest work is a collaboration with Wallowa resources and the USFS to re-photograph and document views and forest conditions recorded from lookouts in Oregon and Washington in the 1930s.

**BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH**  
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This month we are thanking all of our wonderful Volunteers and Sponsors for Summer Lunch in the Park. Because of you we were able to serve 2,689 meals to Wallowa County youth in 3 different locations throughout the summer. Thank you for your generosity and service!

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# Hells Canyon dam boat ramp to be improved

Work planned July 1–Oct. 15, 2020

Travis Mason-Bushman  
USFS

JOSEPH, Ore.—Thanks to partnerships with the Oregon State Marine Board and Idaho Power, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest will rehabilitate the popular Hells Canyon Creek boat ramp on the Snake River in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area.

The project was authorized in a decision signed on Monday, Sept. 16.

"We are pleased to be able to provide safer access to the Wild and Scenic Snake River," said Mark Bingman, deputy district ranger for Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. "This work wouldn't be possible without the cooperation and support of our partners."

Over the last 25 years, river currents have eroded the ramp's concrete surface and rip-rap. The ramp

is used by boaters to access the Snake River below Hells Canyon Dam, and the damage has made it more difficult to safely launch and take out boats.

Next year, through a \$364,000 rehabilitation project, the ramp will be restored and reinforced by drilling holes and pumping concrete grout underneath it, filling voids and increasing stability. In addition, rip-rap will be replaced to protect the ramp against future erosion. The project will

take place during a window between July 1 and October 15, 2020, in order to protect fisheries.

Partnerships with the State of Oregon and Idaho Power are key to the project's successful completion. The Oregon State Marine Board provided funding for project design, and granted more than \$200,000 for construction. Idaho Power contributed \$116,000 in matching funds, while the Wallowa-Whitman is contributing \$48,000.

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**Exploring Wild Headwaters**  
A Study of Stream Networks, Geology, and Transpiration in the River of No Return Wilderness

**Thurs, Oct 3rd • 7pm • FREE!**

**John Whiting, MS**  
Geosciences, Idaho State University

John's research to improve understanding of remote mountain watershed hydrology took place in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness in 2014 and 2015. Based out of the University of Idaho's Taylor Wilderness Research Station on Big Creek, John bushwhacked up small headwater streams and determined water use of Douglas-fir trees. The collaborative effort between Idaho State University geologists and the Taylor Ranch crew sheds light on the question of what happens to snowmelt and rainwater in the rugged Salmon River Mountains.

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