

**OTHER VIEWS**

*Mark Webb*



# Forest collaboratives are working

In a recent opinion piece, Rob Klavins of Oregon Wild cites five different restoration projects as evidence that collaborative efforts across eastern Oregon are eroding environmental protections, decimating forests, and silencing environmental dissent as “extractive interests” take over collaborative groups.

Klavins is not telling the truth about forests or collaborative groups.

Klavins claims the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest “invoked collaboration to get away with logging centuries-old trees in the Lostine ‘safety’ project” that resulted in “lawsuits and an increased fire risk.” But this project does exactly what years of scientific research in eastern Oregon has shown to be effective in reducing fire risk: reduce stand density and shift species composition from fire intolerant grand fir to fire tolerant larch and ponderosa pine.

Moreover, the harvest prescription retains all trees 21” in diameter and larger. The Wallowa-Whitman is not logging “centuries-old trees.”

This project did result in a lawsuit filed by Oregon Wild. But the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the lower court’s ruling that the Wallowa-Whitman developed the project in accordance with federal law and that its public and collaborative engagement process was open, inclusive, and transparent.

Klavins claims the Wallowa-Whitman is now “doubling down with the Morgan Nesbit Project which would nearly clear-cut virgin forests from the edge of the Eagle Cap Wilderness into the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area.” But this project is in the early stages of development and no decisions have been made about what management actions will occur in the Morgan Nesbit area.

Next, Klavins claims the Umatilla National Forest has “proposed logging over 27,000 acres of pristine forests and some of the biggest trees in eastern Oregon on the Ellis Project.” Again, he misrepresents the facts. No decision has been made about what management actions will occur as part of this project. A draft environmental impact statement which analyzes five alternatives has been released for public comment. But no alternative does what Klavins claims.

Klavins also claims the Umatilla is, without any “environmental analysis...developing Parkers Mill, which would allow more logging of roadless forests than has occurred across the lower 48 in the last two decades combined.” But the Forest Forest cannot undertake any kind of action that will have environmental impacts unless it performs an environmental analysis. There is no environmental analysis for Parkers Mill because formal development of the project hasn’t started yet.

Next, Klavins claims the Big Mosquito Project on the Malheur National Forest was supposed “to thin small trees to protect old growth from fire.” But “once the logging equipment rolled in, the big old trees were considered a danger, splashed with blue paint, and cut down.” His tacit claim here is that loggers ignored unit prescriptions and treated “big old trees” as danger trees simply to log them.

His claim is misleading. The unit he references is a unit for steep-slope logging which uses a mechanical tower anchored by cables to nearby trees for stability as it pulls cut trees uphill to the landing. Anchor trees and trees near the landing are treated as work hazards and cut down per Oregon’s Occupational Safety & Health Administration regulations.

Apart from these trees, you won’t find “big old trees splashed with blue paint and cut down” inside Big Mosquito units. In fact, this project was designed to increase survivability of old-growth trees in the face of fire and drought by thinning young trees. The “big old trees” are still standing throughout this project area

Finally, Klavins claims that “long-standing protections for big and old trees called ‘the [Eastside] Screens’ were eliminated” during the Trump administration. This is utterly false. The Eastside Screens were amended to better reflect current science and prioritized the protection of old trees, facilitate the recruitment of old and large fire tolerant species like larch and ponderosa pine, and adaptively monitor this effort in the face of climate change.

All of Klavins’ claims are part of a larger pattern: ignore important details and misrepresent the facts as needed to support his view.

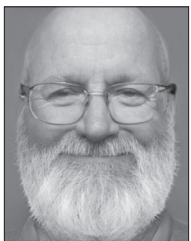
Collaborative efforts across eastern Oregon have enriched public engagement, improved environmental protections, and enhanced forest health. They embody the best way forward for those who truly care about fire adapted landscapes and rural communities in eastern Oregon.

*Mark Webb believes that strong, vibrant communities and healthy landscapes are inseparably linked. He is currently executive director for Blue Mountains Forest Partners, a diverse group of stakeholders who utilize best available science and work collaboratively to increase the pace and scale of restoration on the Malheur National Forest. He is a former Grant County judge.*

# The county as a living space

**OTHER VIEWS**

*Lyman Gettlep*



The rhythms of summer are finally settling upon our beloved valley. The scent of apple blossoms punctuate the call of warblers around town, and the chorus of frogs calling at night injects a placid sense of calm and rightness into our pastoral world. This harmony, this virtue, is not known in 10,000 cities across our land. We are luckier than most.

Yet in the hovels of Portland and in the fetid streets of Frisco, people have found their own kind of peace. The broken city is built upon the pursuit of avarice, and the rot that eats the foundation of these communities feeds upon irresponsible individual choices. For many in these places peace is found in a bottle of brandy, and serenity comes at the tip of a needle. There is no hope there that gives the same sense of a freshly cut field of alfalfa basking in the sun; there is only desperation and lack of dignity.

The seeds of the contagion that ruined these cities are coming to our own fields if we don’t soon act. Wallowa County truly is one of the last, best places. It is our collective responsibility to chart a path different from the one that so many promised lands before us have taken.

If you’re paying attention, you know that there is a severe housing shortage here in Wallowa County. While the causes are many and the solutions are debatable, we know with certainty that this dilemma is not unique to us. America as an ideal is being tested and weighed by a new generation.

Extremist groups are rising like a king tide in this country, and many of them plant seeds of doubt about Americanism into the minds of our youth. If we fail this test our children will live in a very different place. Make no mistake, our country is ailing. Much of the hope for our collective resurrection as a bright beacon to the world lies in the founda-

tions of rural America. It is only our values which can restore stability to the rotting walls within our society, and if we fail to make the American dream attainable it is these values that will be strewn into the ditches of history.

Affordable housing is not only the foundation of the American dream, but also the lifeblood that feeds the rest of our idealism. All prosperity, all peace, all justice, stems from this source which allows Americans to keep believing in the dream. It is this stability which keeps society and its many players functioning as if they were healthy body parts of an interconnected being. Many of us seem to have forgotten our own role in that system, how fortunate we are, and the responsibility we hold to help keep the rest of its parts healthy.

Advocating for free or subsidized housing is not the answer. Let’s be honest; Section 8 is a poverty trap in this county. However, if you’re in real estate, a politician or just a concerned citizen, ask yourself how you’re affecting housing availability here. Do you really need to continue playing the mark-it-up middle man just so that you can own another rental house? Do our values dictate that we increase rent just because we can get away with it? Inflation is affecting us all, but those who don’t own a home are often hit the hardest.

If you’re among the most unfortunate in our community, remember this ... nobody owes you a damn thing. However, if you can be counted among the fortunate, you damned well ought to be giving back. The society that nurtured your success is dependent on more than just a fair market based economy. More than anything, it is dependent on functioning communities and good neighbors. Let us be clear: If you’ve already entered the American dream of home ownership, you are among the fortunate. If you’re on your third or fourth rental property, recognize you’re creating a supply side issue for those who can’t enter the market.

We live in a small town. We are dependent on each other for food, services, security, health care and so much more. The day is quickly coming when folks in this community are going to suffer because nurses, police officers, grocery workers, and firefighters can no lon-

ger afford to live here. Heck, there are already local restaurants that can’t stay open because they don’t have enough employees.

I have faith that the people of this county won’t sell out like so many other communities across the West have before. I have faith in the wholesomeness that lives in our dark, rich earth, and in the whispers of spirits that reside in the old Bowlby stone foundations of our community. There’s plenty of room here to ensure we allow access to the American dream for all the participants needed for a whole community.

We owe it to our neighbors who are struggling to take a hard look at zoning laws. Additionally, we should elect pro-growth leaders regardless of party affiliation, and start the work of recruiting developers to build the right kind of housing by offering appropriate incentives. Perhaps our best option is to let the markets work ... for everybody. We can remove government intrusion into the real estate markets, and support people working to own a home by repealing or rewriting Senate Bill 100. This archaic Oregon law restricts parcel development on plots less than 160 acres. Email your legislators. We can have responsible development in this county which protects our views and natural resources while adding some badly needed housing.

I’ll leave you with this thought. If you’re a landlord in this county currently asking for \$1,500 for rent, and you weren’t asking that much a year ago you should be ashamed of yourself. The market may allow you to kick people while they’re down and times are hard, but that doesn’t mean you should.

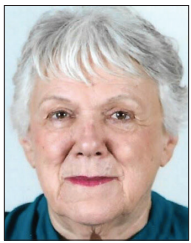
That extra money you’re making isn’t going to buy a competent emergency room nurse on the night your baby has a rollover on the North Highway. However, if you hadn’t marked up the rent so much perhaps that nurse would have stayed in your rental house. Most importantly, we’d all have a long-term valuable addition to our functioning and healthy community.

*Lyman Gettlep is an avocational writer, purveyor of valuable things and multiyear resident of the county.*

# Questions about Bentz’s gun violence solutions

**OTHER VIEWS**

*Evelyn Swart*



Representative Cliff Bentz recently put out his newsletter explaining his votes on recent legislation including his votes on gun violence legislation. He also offered his recommendations for solving America’s gun problems. Following are his recommendations and questions that I have regarding them.

*Prosecute individuals who lie on background checks.*

**Questions:** Would this be done before or after the buyer uses the gun to commit a crime? Would it be a preventive measure or a punitive after-the-fact activity?

*Prosecute those who engage in straw firearm purchases.*

**Questions:** Would this be done before or after the gun is used to commit a crime? Is this a preventive measure or punitive measure after a crime has been committed and the criminal is apprehended?

*Require more detailed comprehensive background checks.*

**Questions:** Who would monitor the background checks? Who would make the decision about the background checks and sales? Who would be liable for improperly approved background checks and sales? Have you previously been opposed to background checks?

*Enhance the capabilities of law enforcement agencies gathering background information.*

**Questions:** How would this be done? Would law enforcement be tasked to approve or disapprove all gun purchases? Would these enhancements involve law enforcement responsibility before or after a crime has been committed?

*Crackdown on the selling of “personal” firearms when they are not really personal firearms.*

**Questions:** Would this prohibit selling “personal” guns at gun shows? Would you also prevent private individuals selling their guns in private transactions? What about guns given as door prizes at NRA banquets?

*Address the root cause of gun violence.*

**Questions:** Who would identify and legislate the cause of gun violence? How many cases of gun violence are not connected to

guns? Who is responsible for influencing Americans to think they need guns?

*Harden the nation’s schools.*

**Questions:** Specifically, how would you “harden schools”? Arm teachers? Surround schools with rock walls? Locked gates? Towers and gun turrets?

*More resource officers and mental health counselors.*

**Questions:** How many resource officers would you recommend and what would be the cost? Who would pay for them? How would you overcome your party’s objections to funding mental health services? Who would be served by mental health professionals? People in the school environment or potential criminals with guns?

*Train school administrators to keep schools safe.*

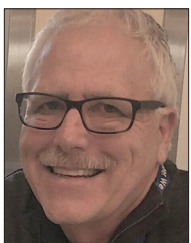
**Questions:** Children and adults are being killed by people with guns in grocery stores, rock concerts, shopping malls and on the streets and in homes. Do not our elected representatives of the United States bear responsibility for the safety of the citizens? Do our elected representatives need training to keep the country safe?

*Evelyn Swart resides in Joseph and is a retired teacher and school administrator.*

# Summer allows a different kind of learning

**OTHER VIEWS**

*Scott Smith*



It is summer! School is out for the summer. Some children have the opportunity to attend summer school but others are home. This doesn’t mean learning has stopped. Summer can be a great time where not only educational learning can take place but life learning too.

Technology is fully part of our culture and we need to help our children embrace it in a positive way. Have your children make short videos for you. Have them do a video of retelling a story or book review. The only evaluation words you need to use when you watch the video back are, “Wow, that’s great, what do you think?”

The “what do you think” places any evaluation back on the child and will begin to develop their own self-evalua-

tion process on their own work. If they say it’s great, go with it, there will be a turning point when they may do it over or create a different video. The objective is self-evaluation and it will become an innate evaluation process you are helping them refine. It’s hard not to assist them with ideas and have them produce a perfect video. Learning and development comes from within and self evaluation and self satisfaction. You can always point out great things you see.

Grandparents, aunts and uncles asking children you know to send you a short video of what they are doing is a great activity for everyone. This is engaging their ability of comprehension along with being a point of connection with the child. The video can be about an activity they did, a story they read or that was read to them, or just how their day was. Any of these skills helps the student build the ability to communicate, evaluate, and learn. Watch over just a short period of time how their short videos will improve.

To get started do a quick check on YouTube of kids doing explanation videos and watch a couple with the child. Ask them

if they would like to make a video about something they are currently experiencing. Chances are strong they will. You’ll have them hooked. It may take a couple of times asking but once they feel this is important to you they will most likely take an interest.

In most cases, children want two things — to please you and to be in control. If they say no, just tell them to let you know when and allow them to go off on their own. Chances are high they will want to take on making a video. Don’t think that these videos have to be posted on any social media, you can share with friends if you choose and as a parent you still need to control posting on social media.

All these activities build the child’s ability to expand their understanding and explain in their own words their perspective. These skills are key in school. Have fun and watch the learning take place before your eyes.

*Scott Smith is a 40-plus year Umatilla County educator and serves on the Decoding Dyslexia Oregon board as its parent/teacher liaison.*