

# Opinion

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## OUR VIEW

# Across the aisle in the Capitol

Policy disagreements, partisanship and the walkouts can give Oregonians a distorted picture of what their Legislature is like. Journalists — and certainly this editorial page — tend to highlight conflicts, not the places of accord.

We were struck recently by what state Rep. Daniel Bonham said during a committee hearing about a resolution to honor former state Rep. Mitch Greenlick. State Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend, is one of the resolution's sponsors.

Bonham is a Republican from The Dalles. His district includes a large part of Central Oregon — Sisters, Culver, Madras and the Warm Springs Reservation. Plot Bonham and Greenlick along an ideological line and there would be a big gap between them in how to solve many of Oregon's challenges. Bonham would be on the right. Greenlick, a Democrat who represented Multnomah and Washington counties beginning in 2002, was on the left. Greenlick died while serving in office on May 15, 2020.

They became friends.

Bonham was appointed to the Legislature in November 2017 to fill a vacancy. He came into the session in 2018 trying to find his way in the new role.

He happened to stay in the same hotel for the session as Greenlick and his wife, Harriet. They fell into the habit of exercising together in the gym and joining each other in the pool. And talking.

"I got to know Rep. Greenlick more on a personal level than anything else," Bonham said. "What really impressed me was just his care and concern for helping somebody brand new to this role that truly was trying to find their way. And despite the fact that we were not of the same party affiliation or shared the same views on how to solve health care problems we had many wonderful conversations.

"I will say we probably talked more about the kids, the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren than we did about public policy. But his care and his compassion for others was just evident in his approach to life. And we saw it come through in very passionate ways both on the floor and in committee and even over lunch.

"I wanted to take the moment to stop by your meeting here today and to offer my words of just gratitude to the Greenlicks. Again I don't know how you talk about Mitch without talking about Harriet. I don't know how, at least from my experience. They were such a team. I am grateful for their friendship and for the kindness that they showed me. I give my absolute support to SCR (Senate Concurrent Resolution) 3 and encourage everyone else to take a moment and read through it and remember and honor our good friend Mitch Greenlick."

*Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the Baker City Herald. Columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Baker City Herald.*

## OTHER VIEWS

# How farmers can make a profit and fight climate change

### Editorial from Bloomberg Opinion:

Agriculture has never been a principal focus of efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. But farm emissions — which make up about 10% of the U.S. total — are coming under increasing scrutiny as Democrats take the reins of agricultural policy and farmers themselves awaken to the threats of climate change. One strategy in particular is getting attention this year: Encouraging farmers to view emissions reduction and carbon sequestration as potential sources of income.

The idea is fairly straightforward. Farmers would take steps to reduce their carbon output, such as reducing tillage to avoid releasing soil carbon, planting cover crops to hold carbon in

the soil, applying manure treatments and "digesters" to limit emissions of methane, and using nitrogen fertilizer more precisely to lower nitrous-oxide emissions. In return, they could sell credits to companies looking to reduce their own climate footprint. Private markets for such credits are already springing up, and Congress took measures to encourage similar exchanges in the 2008 Farm Bill.

But much about this concept has yet to be worked out, notably the basic question of how to measure the climate value of various farming practices. Here the U.S. Department of Agriculture could help. A Senate bill introduced last year would direct the USDA to create standards for measuring the

effectiveness of climate-protection measures on farms, certify people to help farmers take such measurements and verify their value, and work with the Environmental Protection Agency to monitor private carbon-credit markets.

Such exchanges could go a long way toward encouraging farmers to reduce emissions and sequester carbon. But they won't work unless regulators can ensure that they'll actually bring substantial climate benefits. The danger is that a carbon-credit system might instead mainly enable airlines, investment funds, energy firms, agribusinesses and other companies to excuse their own greenhouse-gas emissions by purchasing inexpensive and largely meaningless offsets.

By setting standards for measurement and verification, and monitoring the private markets, the USDA can maximize the potential of "carbon farming." It can also extend the benefits beyond the big operations, which can most easily demonstrate emissions reductions, to smaller farms — by helping them participate in collective efforts. If such measurements proved reliable, the Biden administration's proposal to create a government "carbon bank" — which would buy credits from farmers for a guaranteed price per ton — might act as a powerful incentive for farmers big and small.

Carbon credits won't be enough on their own; they should be thought of

as a complement to other efforts to encourage climate-friendly agriculture, including existing USDA programs that help farmers finance conservation efforts (which also improve soil health and crop yields), and Energy Department research on soil carbon capture. Congress should also make possible improved terms on loans and reduced premiums on crop insurance for farmers who limit emissions (and water pollution) and conserve carbon.

That said, carbon trading does hold significant promise for limiting emissions on the farm — so long as it's based on verifiable practices that will allow markets to accurately value the credits. The first step is to get the right data.



## Your views

### River Democracy Act an unwarranted restriction

With the River Democracy Act, if this new bill passes, 4,700 river miles in Oregon will be included in the Wild and Scenic designation. Considered a remarkable achievement by some, while others see a monster land grab, a back door to more lock up and lock out. Increasing the buffer zone from 1/4 to 1/2 mile on both sides of the rivers creates approximately 3,008,000 acres of de facto wilderness. Baker, Union, Wallowa and Grant counties will be saddled with 700 miles. Wallowa County alone 440 miles. Management plans will be developed by the U.S. Forest Service or other agency. Presently the Forest Service is way over its head in managing the forest, so maybe the other agency that is referred to in the Feb. 13 article in the Baker City Herald can take on the chore.

Unsettling, upsetting, disturbing that this is happening under the term democracy. How and when did we lose control to a room full of politicians in Washington, D.C.? Have we become so complacent this is acceptable? Ignoring impacts and input at the local level has become standard operating procedure. Lack of coordination with the counties circumvents local input (coordination is the law). Failure to recognize local concerns was the primary factor in the Blue Mountain Forest Plan revision withdrawal. Ditto — trying it again.

No one cares more for our public lands and waterways than the residents of Eastern Oregon. Federal and state agencies use many tools to protect and preserve special places. Additional restrictions, outside those presently available, are unwarranted.

I'm urging the Eastern Oregon Counties Association to join in and support Baker County's opposition to the River Democracy Act.

**D.M. and Wanda Ballard**  
Baker City

### Ranchers should speak up about River Democracy Act

I ranch near Union and irrigate from Grande Ronde tributaries — Catherine and Little creeks. Unlike some in my line of work, I was not caught off guard by the introduction of the River Democracy Act because I, like all Oregonians, received an unprecedented invitation

from Sen. Ron Wyden to highlight which rivers and tributaries are worthy of protection.

Some might think that this invitation was only for recreationists. However, for my ranching business, the watershed's ecological health is essential. Moreover, my hometown's water quality, infrastructure, and economy depend on what happens upstream, whether the waterway is on private or federal lands.

If we continue neglecting our floodplains' health, fires and flooding will further erode infrastructure and threaten our safety. Windblown trees and ice jams are already threatening Union due to channelization. Imagine what would happen if fire took over our forest lands with little vegetation to slow snowpack melting. With the fire management tools offered in the Act, we are less likely to see huge amounts of sediment choking creeks, flooding out private properties, and silting in irrigation systems.

While some seem concerned that this legislation will negatively impact their private property and water rights, I see this as an opportunity to build resilience downstream by restoring the waterways upstream. This will enhance the value of our private property and water rights.

By supporting Sen. Wyden's effort to consider more Wild and Scenic River designations for Oregon, we have an opportunity to get to work right away to shape our desired outcomes. Adding waterways to the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act gives us more voice in shaping the management of what happens upstream.

Whether using properly managed livestock, regenerative forestry practices, or enhancing recreation opportunities, the River Democracy Act gives us a voice and opportunities for regenerative management.

We have an open invitation from the senator now to modify the River Democracy Act, to answer important questions, and adjust or even take stream segments out if it makes sense to do so.

Cattlemen, don't be caught off guard. Accept the invitation and be part of the solution.

**Andrea Malmberg**  
Union

### Why I suggested additions to wild, scenic river list

My letter is in response to the recent editorial about the new Wild and Scenic River recommendations for Baker County, and a recent letter expressing concern about those designations and their source. Like Ms. Coen, I am another local who submitted recommendations. I drew on my experience and knowledge of certain streams gained as the district hydrologist for the Whitman Ranger District from June 2002 to March 2018 and time spent exploring on my own. I took the same methodical approach I use when assessing any issue that deals with water resources. I reviewed the Wild and Scenic designation criteria, and the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Wild and Scenic River Inventory Documentation last updated in March 2010. I looked at maps and examined them for road locations, road densities, ditches, and reservoirs. I sought data from Oregon Water Resources Department and Idaho Power when needed to determine if ditch withdrawals and/or reservoir releases noticeably affected stream flows sufficient to make them ineligible based on the criteria. Like others who submitted recommendations, I saw this as an opportunity to add value and protection to the wonderful rivers that flow through our county and serve as the lifeblood for our community. Some of these rivers are wild and scenic while others, though no longer "wild," remain scenic with high recreational value and worthy of designation.

As for unintended consequences, they are a fact of life to every decision be it to do something or to do nothing. The consequences are just different. If we are thoughtful, the positive benefits are great and drawbacks few or none, and any drawbacks worth the benefits. We are fortunate that Senators Wyden and Merkley sought local input. We are fortunate that locals responded, and took the time to recommend streams. The River Democracy Act is worth reviewing. Its goals are in our collective best interest and we are fortunate that so many of our recommendations made it onto the list.

**Suzanne Fouty**  
Baker City