

Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Learning lessons from fires

Oregon is going to have to make different choices if it is going to reduce the danger of wildfire.

Homes near forest or rangeland? The priority should be firebreaks. They should have fine mesh over their vents where floating embers can get sucked in. They need roofs and siding resistant to flame.

The wildfires are going to come. They are part of this region's history — human-made and lightning made. And because of climate change it's going to get worse.

We won't save every property or even more tragically every life. But we can save more.

The Bootleg Fire in Klamath and Lake counties was caused by lightning. It burned more than 400,000 acres. That would be like fire over half of Rhode Island.

When the fire was racing along, it essentially went around the Sycan Marsh Preserve. That's a property held by the Nature Conservancy.

That is not so much a mystery. The preserve is wetter. Fire doesn't like wet. It's a wetland, soaking up the spring runoff and gradually letting it flow into the Sycan River.

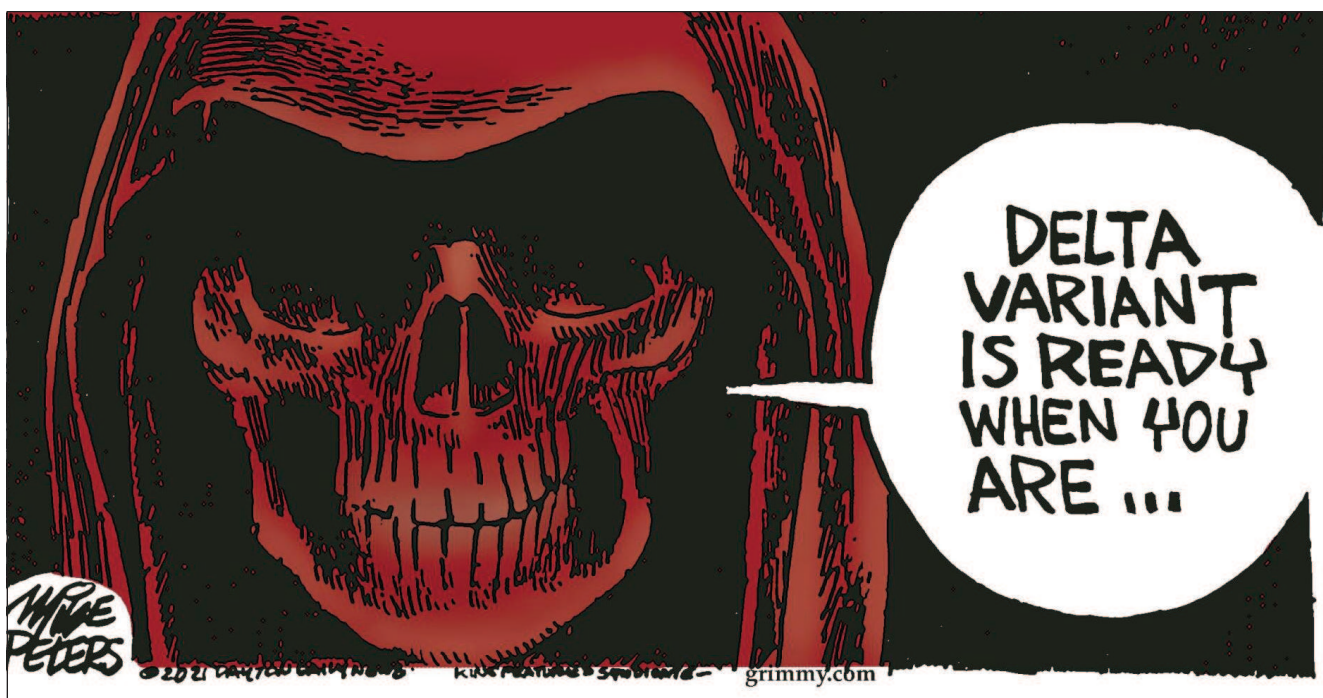
The land managers there have not been taking chances, though. They did prescribed burns on the property. That reduced fuels. And gave the preserve the better chance at dodging a fire.

If your home or property skirts the edge of a forest or wildlands, give it that same better chance. Bark dust, mulch or whatever you call it can make lovely groundcover.

They aren't the best choice to make life difficult for wildfire. Don't give it a foothold in your neighborhood.

Look at your land like a fire would and then make it so a fire has no easy place to go.

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Your views

Railroad quiet zone would help children, community

My husband and I lived for 10 months within one block of the railroad tracks. We lived there while our home was being built and we both became very discouraged with the public disturbance the train causes. We believe the blowing of the horn at each crossing is an unnecessary breach of community peace. My husband has a hearing loss based on military service and requires hearing aids. He used industrial ear plugs to sleep and he still heard the extremely loud blaring of the train horns. Yet, it is my granddaughter that I am most concerned for.

She spends six hours a day in the intermediate school right next to the tracks. I encourage anyone opposed to the Quiet Zone to go spend a few hours by the intermediate school to see what our children and grandchildren are subjected to. I wouldn't be surprised to learn their hearing is being permanently damaged, not to mention their cognitive performance due to the constant distraction. A Quiet Zone is a lot less expensive than a new school, though I think it would be ideal to move the school away from the tracks entirely. This should never have been allowed to happen. Our great uncle George met the first train that arrived in Baker and I am sure he and the community leadership of that time never intended this. Now, as his descendants, we want a safer, better future for our grandchildren.

I am asking the City Council to move forward with making this community safer and quieter. We think this is a good use of city funds, and we also

support the fundraising by community members. We urge the City Council to approve the Quiet Zone so the residents of Baker City can enjoy an improved quality of life, our children can grow up safe and healthy, and grandparents can know this community cares about them and future generations.

Joan and Randolph Tracy
Baker City

Cartoon questioning Fauci shouldn't be taken seriously

I was disturbed by the recent political cartoon published in the Herald that compared Dr. Anthony Fauci to both Pinocchio and the Jack Nicholson character in the movie "A Few Good Men." The cartoon suggests that while being questioned by Senator Rand Paul (who strongly inferred that he was lying), Dr. Fauci not only lied but also suggested that the American public could not "handle" the truth. Dr. Fauci has been involved in public health for more than 50 years, won multiple awards for his service, and advised every American president since Ronald Reagan. Senator Paul was trained as an ophthalmologist. I have followed the struggle against COVID-19 closely since it began. I haven't seen anything to suggest that Dr. Fauci is less than both competent and honest. The purpose of a political cartoon is to persuade its viewers to a particular point of view. Does the Baker City Herald really believe that the point of view expressed by this cartoon is worth taking seriously?

Kevin Lee
Baker City

Permits shouldn't be needed to kill attacking wolves

Wolves continue to kill livestock. No big surprise, that's what they do. But shooting wolves shouldn't be that big a deal! It shouldn't make the front page and it shouldn't take any special permission from a state agency or, in fact, from anyone. It should just be done. And if the agency staff are really going to address the problem, they should shoot the breeding pair, not just a couple of pups! Wolves should be included in the same category as rattlesnakes, coyotes, badgers, black widow spiders, and mosquitoes that can be killed on sight. They are all animals that can kill humans and cause other damage. In the case of wolves, they primarily hurt ranchers by killing or seriously maiming livestock. Aside from the kills, wolves hurt livestock by running them through fences, causing weight loss from harassment, generating anxiety, and how they respond to typical cowboy interaction (gathering, corral sorting, response to dogs, etc.). Ranchers bear the brunt of these wolf assault costs while the compensation program is a sad joke.

Wolves should not be protected by the ESA or any other legislation. Ranchers and farmers are the people who feed all of us and they need to be supported. At the time of the Civil War some 75% of Americans were directly involved in agriculture. Today that involvement is 2%. Ranchers and farmers are the ones who are endangered and need protection, not the wolves. Wolf protection needs to be ended.

Jim Carnahan
Baker City

Pediatrician urges COVID-19 vaccinations

I have spent a large part of my career advocating for the safety and efficacy of vaccines for children and adults.

As a pediatrician in Columbia, South Carolina, I have had many conversations with parents about vaccines that prevent whooping cough, measles, mumps, polio, meningitis, hepatitis, cervical cancer, and now COVID-19. After several years of these conversations, I have found ways to present the facts while also listening carefully and respectfully to parents' concerns and answering any questions that children and teens may have.

But the COVID-19 vaccine conversations are different.

Some of my patients and their parents were knocking down the clinic doors to get the vaccine as soon as it was available to them.

Then there were the families who were generally in favor of the vaccine but had some questions. These were fairly easy conversations during which I was able to address their concerns and discuss the benefits of the vaccine and the risks of the disease. Most of these families received the vaccine shortly after these conversations.

And then there are the families who are truly hesitant to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Some are hesitant about vaccines in general, but most are not. Some believe that the vaccine was created too quickly and hasn't undergone enough testing. Others have heard stories about medical problems related to the vaccine, including heart disease and infertility. Some fear that it may alter their genetic information.

I try my best to address all these concerns with the families in my practice and I will try to address them here in the same way, because the health and safety of our children depend on it.

Are there potential side effects from these vaccines? Yes, as with any vaccines there are potential side effects. They have been largely found to resolve on their own and certainly are less serious than the potentially serious short- and long-term effects of COVID-19.

The potential side effect that has received the most media attention and generated the most fear is myocarditis, or heart inflammation after a COVID-19 vaccine. Although this can occur after

vaccination, it is extremely rare and typically mild. The benefits of vaccination far outweigh this very uncommon side effect.

What about blood clots after the COVID-19 vaccine? There is a rare chance of clots after vaccination, mostly women under age 50, with the Johnson and Johnson Janssen vaccine. Again, the benefits of vaccination are much higher than the risk of getting this rare side effect.

And what of the reports of long-term infertility following COVID-19 vaccine? There is no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccine, have any ability to impair fertility. The mRNA vaccine does its work and is broken down and eliminated.

How about changes to the patient's DNA from the COVID-19 vaccine? Neither the mRNA vaccines nor the viral vector vaccines have any ability to interact with or change a person's DNA. The science is very clear on this, and it's vital for us to trust the rigorous processes that go into a vaccine before it ever becomes available to the general population.

And what about the folks who continue to say that the COVID-19

is not a dangerous illness for children? Well, the Delta variant has changed that. Our pediatric emergency rooms and pediatric intensive care units in South Carolina are full. Not all the children admitted there have COVID-19, but some of them certainly do. When these units are full, it affects everyone, regardless of the reason that they need emergency or intensive care.

There have also been deaths in children from COVID-19 disease. While infrequent, even one death from a disease that could have been prevented is too many.

The COVID-19 vaccines have now been given to millions of people ages 12 and older. The Pfizer vaccine is approved for those age 12 and up while the Moderna and Johnson and Johnson's Janssen products are approved for those 18 and older. All three vaccines have undergone extensive testing. All have been found to be safe and effective. All have been shown to dramatically decrease the risk of catching COVID-19. More importantly, they have been shown to dramatically decrease the risk of hospitalization and death from

COVID-19.

COVID-19 cases are spiking, especially in the South, and the highly contagious Delta variant is on the move. About 90% of COVID-19 cases were caused by the Delta variant as of late July, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports.

The vaccine can help prevent this spread and get us back on the path to normalcy.

If you have questions or fears about the vaccine, please talk with your family doctor or pediatrician. We are here to listen and to help.

I will continue to advocate for the COVID-19 vaccine for my patients who are old enough to receive it. I will continue to have the conversations and to answer the questions so that my patients and their parents can feel comfortable being vaccinated. I will continue to follow the science as the vaccine trials continue for younger children. And I will continue to advocate for children as we navigate our way through this pandemic.

Dr. Deborah Greenhouse is a pediatrician in Columbia, South Carolina.

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