

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Call to kill wolf pack warranted

Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash lays out a convincing case for killing all the wolves in the Lookout Mountain pack in his recent letter to Curt Melcher, director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW).

Ash points out that nonlethal tactics to deter wolves, including ranchers hazing wolves and checking their cattle frequently, have failed to curb wolf attacks in the area north and northeast of Durkee. Wolves have killed six head of cattle and injured two others since mid July. Melcher approved a lethal take permit for up to four subadult wolves on July 31, and the next day ODFW employees shot and killed two wolf pups. There were no confirmed attacks for the next two and a half weeks, but since then Lookout Mountain wolves have killed four calves, the most recent attack confirmed by ODFW biologists on Monday, Sept. 13. No additional wolves have been killed. Ash also wrote that the abundance of wild prey, including elk and deer, in the Lookout Mountain area hasn't deterred wolves from attacking cattle.

In the two decades since wolves migrated from Idaho to Oregon, the animals have expanded their population and geographic range. ODFW confirmed that at least 173 wolves were in the state at the end of 2020, and the agency concedes that is not a complete tally.

Although wolves have occasionally killed livestock, ODFW has authorized the killing of wolves just seven times, including the permit for the Lookout Mountain wolves. According to Oregon's 2019 wolf management plan, killing wolves is an option in cases of chronic depredation. The situation this summer in the Lookout Mountain area certainly qualifies as chronic.

It's also clear that ODFW's strategy of targeting subadults rather than the pack's breeding pair has failed. The 2019 wolf plan cites research in Montana in 2015 which showed that killing some wolves from a pack reduced subsequent attacks on livestock by 29%, while killing the entire pack cut attacks by 79% over five years.

Wolves and livestock can coexist in Oregon; indeed, they usually do.

But that's not the case now with the Lookout Mountain pack.

—Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

## Your views

### Government shouldn't force COVID-19 shots

It is the sickest of ironies (possibly cognitive dissonance) that the same liberals who demand a woman have complete control of her body, to the point of being allowed to murder her unborn child, are just fine with a governor and president who want to force citizens to receive a COVID shot! Where are the "my body, my choice" demands regarding shots? To be clear, I support getting the shots and my wife and I got ours last spring, after discussion with our medical providers, as soon as our age group was eligible. The significance, however, is that we did it by our choice, not the governor's or president's mandate. While I encourage my fellow citizens to talk to their medical provider and evaluate getting the shots, it should be absolutely their choice and I staunchly oppose the shot mandates and consider them gross overreach of government.

Our state and national leaders are demonstrating tyranny, not sound judgment, and causing unnecessary division within our country. If people aren't getting the shots, it means they don't need them or aren't convinced that they should. The governor and president need to come up with better information and arguments, not force.

**Jim Carnahan**  
Baker City

### Who is being 'tread upon' in the country, exactly?

As anyone who lives in the area knows, it is not uncommon to see "Don't Tread On Me" flags waving from various pickups and residences. The vast majority of these flags are being displayed by "anti-maskers" and "non-vaxxers." What these people don't seem to realize is that "Don't Tread On Me" works both ways. History has proven time and again that real Americans care about the health, safety and well being of others. There are currently over 177 million real Americans that are fully vaccinated; many of whom are growing tired of being "tread upon" by people acting like a bunch of spoiled 10-year-olds who seem to think they have the right to spread sickness and death to others. For the record, nobody has



that "right" ... period. I suspect that many of these same people don't even bother to wash their hands after using the bathroom simply because public health standards and common sense requires it.

**Leslie Dickey**  
Baker City

### City Council should be working to defeat virus

It is so frustrating to see the COVID-19 cases surge here in our county. I am concerned with our City Council. Instead of encouraging ways to defeat the virus, they are condemning those who are at least doing something to help. Considering suing the governor for trying to help is a bunch of bull, forgive my bluntness, but any restrictions placed on businesses here or mandates that may increase can be placed squarely on the Council's shoulders.

**Don Worley**  
Baker City

### Reasons for silencing the train whistles in Baker City

Reason 1: As my dad lay dying on his death bed, his last words to me were, "The money, it's buried under the ..." but at that moment a train passed and blew his whistle. Unfortunately at that same moment my dad also passed and the money remains buried under the ... I have not liked trains whistling since that day.

Reason 2: Rumor has it that a certain UP engineer is having a messy breakup with his significant other

who happens to still live in Baker and taking revenge to new levels holds the horn on. Well thanks, Casey Jones, there's others who live here too.

Reason 3: According to the Geneva Convention, sleep deprivation is a war crime. That means every night in Baker UP carries out 11 to 14 war crimes.

Reason 4: Maybe those people who keep sending their junk mail about getting a hearing aid would cease and desist.

Union Pacific claims it would be too expensive to extend the crossing bars in lieu of removing warning whistles rendering any audible warning system useless because certain people race the barriers anyway. Removing the train's horns isn't going to change anything. Without the horn honks, but with additional length on the bars making it harder to swerve around we could still eliminate many of the mufflerless trucks in town — another noise problem. These people have nothing better do than to play chicken with RR bars. Do we really want to protect these people?

Let the whistles and horns and bells sound all they want but in exchange, bring back Amtrak so we can at least get out of town and take a break from all the noise.

There's plenty of other reasons too we need to get rid of this noise. La Grande is whistle-free; why can't we be? Then again, they got the college; we got the prison.

**Whit Deschner**  
Baker City

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**President Joe Biden:** The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1111; to send comments, go to [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

**U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley:** D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S.

Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Baker City office, 1705 Main St., Suite 504, 541-278-1129; [merkley.senate.gov](mailto:merkley.senate.gov).

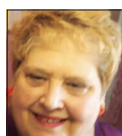
**U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden:** D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; [wyden.senate.gov](mailto:wyden.senate.gov).

## OTHER VIEWS

# Railroad quiet zone will improve Baker City

Another sleepless night prompts me to write this letter. I have always believed in speaking and sharing from the heart. Speaking of hearts, I have a heart condition and other health issues that recently led me to resign from City Council. Good sleep is a key element in healing. We all deserve a good night's sleep! But the train horn continues to wake me, and many others I have talked with, at all hours of the night. Especially the one engineer who, I believe, opens the horn at full blast at Haines and never releases it till he gets past Durkee, at least that's how it sounds to me when awakened yet again. Good health is a thing of the past for many of us if we cannot get a decent night's sleep.

I support the railroad quiet zone and I was a member of the City Council in 2019 that voted unanimously to initiate the process with the Federal Railroad Administration to move forward on the project. We heard from teachers and students at South Baker Elementary School about how the train horns disrupt instruction time. We also heard from business owners who believed their lodging businesses and tourism would benefit from a quiet zone and how they have had cancellations because of the noise of the horns



**LYNETTE PERRY**

at night. We saw support from the public at town hall meetings.

The drawback of building safety barriers at the railroad crossings that allow a quiet zone has always been the cost. Even in 2002, the issue that went to the ballot was the need to use public money to build the improved crossings. With the fundraising commitment of quiet zone volunteers, there is no reason to waste time and city money on a ballot measure. It can be supported by your comments to City Council to agree to let the volunteers proceed with their fundraising efforts to fund the project. Let's pull together to get it approved. Email your City Council members to support the quiet zone. You can find their email addresses at: <https://www.bakercity.com/Directories.aspx?DID=4>

Baker School District recognizes the impacts of the train horns on the health of our children. The people who are most at risk are our children and they don't get to vote — that's why we have a City Council who should vote to support the young and the elderly so they can all

be safe and healthy.

Regarding cost, the City's current estimate for the project is \$150,000. This can be done affordably because, besides city staff time which has already been invested, the quiet zone volunteer group is committed to fundraising for construction and materials costs. No raised taxes! We send things to a ballot measure when there is a significant cost, and an additional cost to the taxpayer. That's why it went to a ballot measure in 2002 when the total price tag was much higher than it is now and no one was volunteering to fundraise. Example: The Powder River Pavilion didn't go to a ballot measure because our Build the Bandstand Committee did fundraising to get it built, with permission of City Council. Once built it was gifted to the City of Baker City. It is the same with the quiet zone, no need for a ballot to confuse the issue.

What is a quiet zone? Train engineers are required by federal regulations to blast their horns four times before each railroad crossing. When quiet zone safety measures are added to crossings, the horn mandate goes away. No more zig zagging through down arms of the train crossings will also save lives. Engineers can still use a

horn when needed. At a recent City Council meeting, we heard questions about safety and cost. The Federal Railroad Administration is currently reviewing the City's plans and will only approve the quiet zone if crossings are deemed to be as safe as or safer than with horns.

Baker City has been blessed with volunteers who have built so many of the amenities we all enjoy today. To name a few: The Museum, the Interpretive Center, Central Park, The Salt Lick statue, the playground, and Powder River Pavilion at Geiser-Pollman Park. The dedicated volunteers working on the quiet zone are people who live here and love the community just like the volunteers of these other projects.

Congratulations to the quiet zone volunteers for seeing a problem and being willing to put in the time and effort to raise funds privately to make Baker City a safer and quieter community for all of us to enjoy. One thing I know is that we must take care of each other and when there is a problem, we need to fix it. Squashing these dedicated volunteers because some of them are new to the community is a huge mistake. All they want to do is improve the community, support the learning and lives of our children, and improve

railroad crossing safety for all of us. (Not to mention a better night's sleep for all.)

I know from my volunteer efforts how much dedication and team effort it takes to make a dream a reality. I also know how much the community appreciates improvements once they are done.

Yes, the sounds of the trains are part of our lives, but we should not minimize the impact on children learning, businesses losing revenue or people suffering from lack of sleep because of constant disruption by the horns. We will still hear them, just farther away and much softer. We'll also still hear the clickety clack of the train on the rails, which would be more pleasant without the shrill horns disrupting us.

Think back to the time when we nearly lost our electric service and Dick Haynes and Peggi and Glen Timm started the penny pledge campaign, which led to the creation of OTEC and keeping the lights shining. Dedicated people caring about everyone in their community, making Baker City a more pleasant place to live! That is what Baker City and rural America is all about!

*Lynette Perry is a former Baker City Council member.*