

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

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Quotas come to the wilderness

You have had to get up very early in recent summers to be able to enjoy a hike up Green Lakes Trail in the Cascades without being escorted by a generous flock of fellow hikers and happy dogs.

It's one of the most coveted hikes around. Rushing water is by your side most of the way. If you are ambitious and in sufficient shape, you can keep right on going and summit the South Sister.

The hike has been a sensational bargain. There has long been a requirement for a parking pass and a wilderness permit. But buying a seasonal parking pass was a simple-enough hurdle, and the permits were free.

This summer, it changes — for sure — the U.S. Forest Service announced this week. It will still be a relative bargain, but you won't be able to go unless you can snag one of the limited permits. "Beginning Friday, May 28 and ending on Friday, September 24, 2021 day-use permits will be required for 19 out of 79 trails in the Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, and Three Sisters wilderness areas," the announcement read. A day-use permit is only \$1 per person per outing. An overnight permit is \$6 per person per outing.

Some permits will go on sale starting at 7 a.m. on April 6 at www.recreation.gov. The balance will be held on a 7-day rolling window so people can be slightly more spontaneous. You can also call for reservations at 1-877-444-6777 or visit a local Forest Service office, if it is open.

It's not hard to understand why the Forest Service has forced the public into quotas for access to the wilderness areas. The trails are popular. Access is relatively close to a wilderness-hungry population. And some people treat the areas alongside the trail with less respect than a trash can or a bathroom in their home. Could the Forest Service have stepped up enforcement, instead? That would take a very unwilderness like level of security.

We still can't stop feeling a sense of loss, because there is loss. Access to the wilderness has become more exclusive. People with time and money are less likely to suffer much of an inconvenience. It could lead to diminished appreciation of the wild spaces close by — even though they will be more protected than ever.

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Historical editorials: Mail run by children

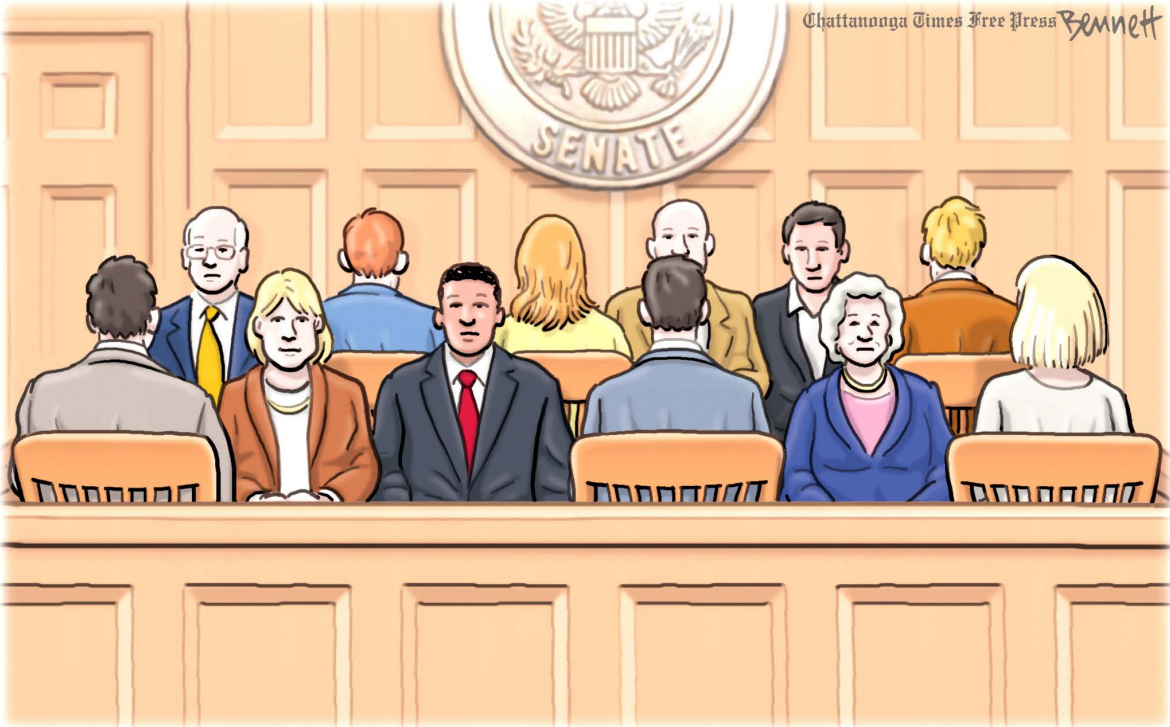
Editor's note: The following editorials originally appeared in the Jan. 27, 1905 edition of what was then called *The Bend Bulletin*.

By a change in the mail schedule up the river, designed to avoid a Sunday layover there, there is a layover of two days instead of one, as formerly. This mail route seems to be the toy of a bunch of kids. Changes are made without regard to the public interests involved, without much notice and without sense, as a result of which some part of the route is continually and needlessly "balled up."

...

Let us not be too much harrowed by displays of domestic infelicity,

Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.



Clay Bennett, Chattanooga Times Free Press

The Impeachment Jury

My Nickel's Worth

Protect our rivers

While fishing along the Lower Deschutes last fall, I stopped at a high point above the water and watched a pair of salmon spawn. As they hovered over a shallow gravel bar, the female used her tail to sweep depressions in the river bed to deposit her eggs. The male seemed more preoccupied with chasing rival males away than spawning.

Watching them reminded me of how rare and fragile this spectacle has become, and how fortunate I am to have the opportunity to witness it. It also reminded me of how connected these fish are to the wider landscape around them. The water in the Deschutes drains from the east slope of the Cascades, flows from alpine meadows in the Ochocos, and bubbles up from the porous rocks of Central Oregon. Those salmon reminded me that unless we as a society value them and protect their habitat through legislation like the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, they won't be able to survive.

If clean water and healthy habitats are a value to us, then it's time to declare it by expanding our inventory of protected waterways. Sen. Ron Wyden and Sen. Jeff Merkley's new rivers bill does just that. Passing this bill will not only help salmon and all the other plants and animals that depend on those habitats. It will also help each of us fulfill our responsibility to our children and grandchildren by leaving them a landscape where they too can marvel at this great natural spectacle.

— Ed Putnam Bend

Not such a great job

Listen to Gov. Kate Brown's press conference last week? Under the impression the state is doing a bang-up job administering COVID-19 vaccines? Sunday's Oregonian headlines and accompanying stories tell a different story.

Front page "State warns of 'chaos' for seniors." "Starting Monday, Oregon will become one of the last states in the country to make seniors 80 and older eligible for the vaccines." The state admits there are not enough vaccines to meet the demand. But they proudly announce a weekly rollout for seniors 65 and older, adding to the chaos.

Page 12: "Hundreds of large care homes yet to receive coronavirus vaccine" and "The governor erroneously claimed all residents had gotten a shot." According to her, "We have gone through and vaccinated every senior who's wanted a vaccine that lives in assisted living, that lives in congregated care and in skilled nursing." Facts, "as many as 307 of the state's 588 assisted living homes statewide have not been offered a first round of the vaccines" and the same for "more than 1,200 of the state's 1,400 adult foster homes."

Facts: "77% of Oregon's 2,019 COVID-19 deaths occurred in Oregonians 70 and older." Gov. Brown chose vaccinating teachers before seniors in a "push to re-open schools." But schools have been slow to reopen, fearful of face-to-face instruction. "Federal officials have said schools can safely re-open without vaccinating teachers." The Page 13 headline

"State expected to begin vaccinating inmates this week." Explain to vulnerable seniors why "Governor Kate Brown has authorized the Oregon Health Authority to provide the state prison system with 10,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine for its inmate population beginning this week."

Thank you, Gov. Brown for telling us you are doing such a great job.

— Jim Hannah, Redmond

Stop coyote killing contests

Coyote killing contests are barbaric and cruel! I would like to thank Reps. Brad Witt, Rob Nosse, Sheri Schouten, Janeen Sollman and Marty Wilde for their support and sponsorship of House Bill 2728. I'm asking all representatives to vote for HB 2728, and put an end to these grotesque coyote killing contests. There is overwhelming support, across the state of Oregon, to stop this awful practice; it simply does not represent the majority of Oregonians and their support for science-based, humane and ethical wildlife management policies.

Studies have shown that the killing contests do not reduce coyote populations, but instead can cause splintered packs, and increased reproduction rates. These contests have also not proven to be an effective means to reduce conflict with livestock or increase game species. Please follow suit with Washington, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Massachusetts, California, and Vermont, and finally stop coyote killing contests and pass HB 2728!

— Renee Espenel, Portland

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's signature, phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words; they must be signed; and they must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel's Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
Bend, OR 97708

Fax: 541-385-5804

Why people who work in nursing homes aren't getting shots

BY ASIF MERCHANT
Special to The Washington Post

In almost two decades working in nursing homes, I've never been through a time as dire as last spring. Facilities like mine, in the greater Boston area, were working with minimal to no protective gear, very little infection-control training, limited laboratory services and constantly changing public-health guidelines. Residents with COVID-19 deteriorated so quickly that they'd crash right in front of me, before we even got their test results.

Staff members got sick, and others stayed home because they were scared to get sick. While many doctors stopped going into nursing homes out of fear for their own safety, my team of physicians and nurse practitioners felt it was our duty to continue seeing patients every day. The need was so great: Units that usually had one certified nursing assistant for every eight to 10 residents suddenly had one person in charge of 30 to 40; we were also short on nurses. People weren't get-

ting their meals or personal care on time; they suffered from dehydration, bedsores and social isolation. It was a heartbreaking time. I lost over 100 patients.

As we learned more about the virus — treatments, proper infection control — conditions improved. Then the vaccine offered our first real hope that this pandemic would eventually end. I got my shots in January, as soon as I could.

But I soon realized that not everyone shared my enthusiasm. About half the staff in the four facilities where I serve as medical director said they would not take the vaccine. This might seem shocking: We work in the medical field, and we saw some of the worst ravages of this disease up close. And yet, despite the misery we'd witnessed, my colleagues were wary of the one intervention that offered a light at the end of the tunnel.

Health authorities across the country have reported widespread vaccine hesitancy among nursing home staff. Uptake among residents is high. But a national survey of certi-

fied nursing assistants late last year found that nearly 72% didn't want to be vaccinated. The governor of Ohio reported in late December that around 60% of his state's nursing home staffers had elected not to take the vaccine yet. Last month, a union representing nursing home staff in Maryland and D.C. estimated that up to 80% of its members opted not to be vaccinated in the first push at their facilities. One Miami health system found that only half its employees wanted to get vaccinated immediately; about 15% said they were not interested in getting vaccinated at all.

Those statistics are much less surprising when you consider who works in nursing homes. A lot of the certified nursing assistants I work with are people of color. Their mistrust has deep roots: The United States has a long, ugly history of doctors experimenting on Black people without regard for their consent or needs. And working with the elderly — another population our society marginalizes and neglects — has

done little to shore up my colleagues' faith that the government is acting in their best interests. Nursing homes were among the first and hardest-hit settings in this pandemic, and we never had enough N95 masks or even simple surgical face coverings. So when nursing home employees are informed that they'll be among the first to get the vaccine — that they're in the highest-priority group — they're skeptical. It doesn't help that many of the most widely available educational materials about the vaccine are produced only in English, shutting out my co-workers who primarily speak Spanish or Haitian Creole.

I started running town halls, in person and over video, to talk to the staff in various Massachusetts nursing homes about the vaccine. Some people come with questions about their specific situations: autoimmune conditions, allergies to food or medicine, pregnancy. I've heard more lurid worries, too. Some people thought the shot had a GPS tracker in it that would allow the government to fol-

low their movements. Others claimed that the vaccine changed your DNA and that any future children could inherit the mutation.

No matter how outlandish some fears seem, I can't shrug them off. People's concerns aren't totally random; it's counterproductive to just dismiss them. Instead, I try to figure out where their understanding went wrong and to offer an explanation for that misunderstanding.

I also talk about why I took the vaccine: I see COVID-19 patients every day. I got the shot to protect myself, of course, and to protect my family members — especially my parents, who are elderly and live at home with me. I also want to keep my nursing home residents and co-workers safe; I have a responsibility to my community. And, I add, I'm tired of all the precautions that have become life-or-death necessities in the pandemic. We all want normalcy. Vaccine uptake is our ticket there.

■ Asif Merchant is a geriatrician who serves on the COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group for the governor of Massachusetts.