

Permits may be good for wilderness but not for access

Heads up, lovers of the wilderness. Next week is the launch of the U.S. Forest Service's new permit system.

It guarantees to limit access and increase the price of access to public land. But more government control over access may mean a better wilderness experience.

If you want to go, the bottom line will now be planning ahead. Overnight users will be required to have permits everywhere in Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington and Three Sisters wilderness areas. Day use permits will be required at 19 of the 79 trails in those areas.

Many of the permits may go quickly. They go up for grabs as of 7 a.m. on April 6 on recreation.gov. You can also call 877-444-6777. For day use permits 20% to 50% of a trailhead's full supply of permits could all be gone on April 6.

The remainder of the permits — somewhere between 50% and 80% — will be released on a seven-day rolling window on May 28. "The 7-day rolling window means that every day new permits will be available," the Forest Service website says.

The process is similar for overnight permits, with 40% of the overnight permits available on April 6. The remainder of permits will have the same sort of rolling window as of May 28.

The permit system will apply to the period May 28 through Sept. 24.

Each branch of the Deschutes Public Library will have a limited number of permits for people to check out. It's not clear how many.

The good news is that the price is a bargain, if you think about what you get. It's only \$1 for a day-use permit per individual. It's only \$6 for overnight permits per overnight group of one to 12 people.

And by limiting the number of permits, getting up into the Cascades would come with fewer crowds, should mean fewer cars and would hopefully mean less trash and erosion. That could better preserve the wilderness for future generations.

The not-so-good news is the hassle of getting a permit, and their limited availability will almost certainly mean fewer people get to enjoy the wilderness. Any system that limits access may exacerbate any existing inequality of access by income and race. And when people can't experience the wilderness, they may be less willing to support efforts to preserve it.

So get ready to get your permits. Leave some for us.

Is it fair to wait on a ruling on nonunanimous juries?

When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Ramos v. Louisiana*, it clearly allowed the verdict to be tossed out in many nonunanimous jury cases. Did it apply retroactively? That was not clear.

Oregon and Louisiana were the only two states for decades that had allowed people to be convicted of many felonies with less than a unanimous jury verdict. The *Ramos* decision allowed people who were in the middle of appeals to have their convictions overturned and retried. The decision did settle the issue of retroactivity — in other words, could cases that were completed be overturned and retried?

Some are calling on Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum to allow that to happen. She has decided to wait until that issue is clar-

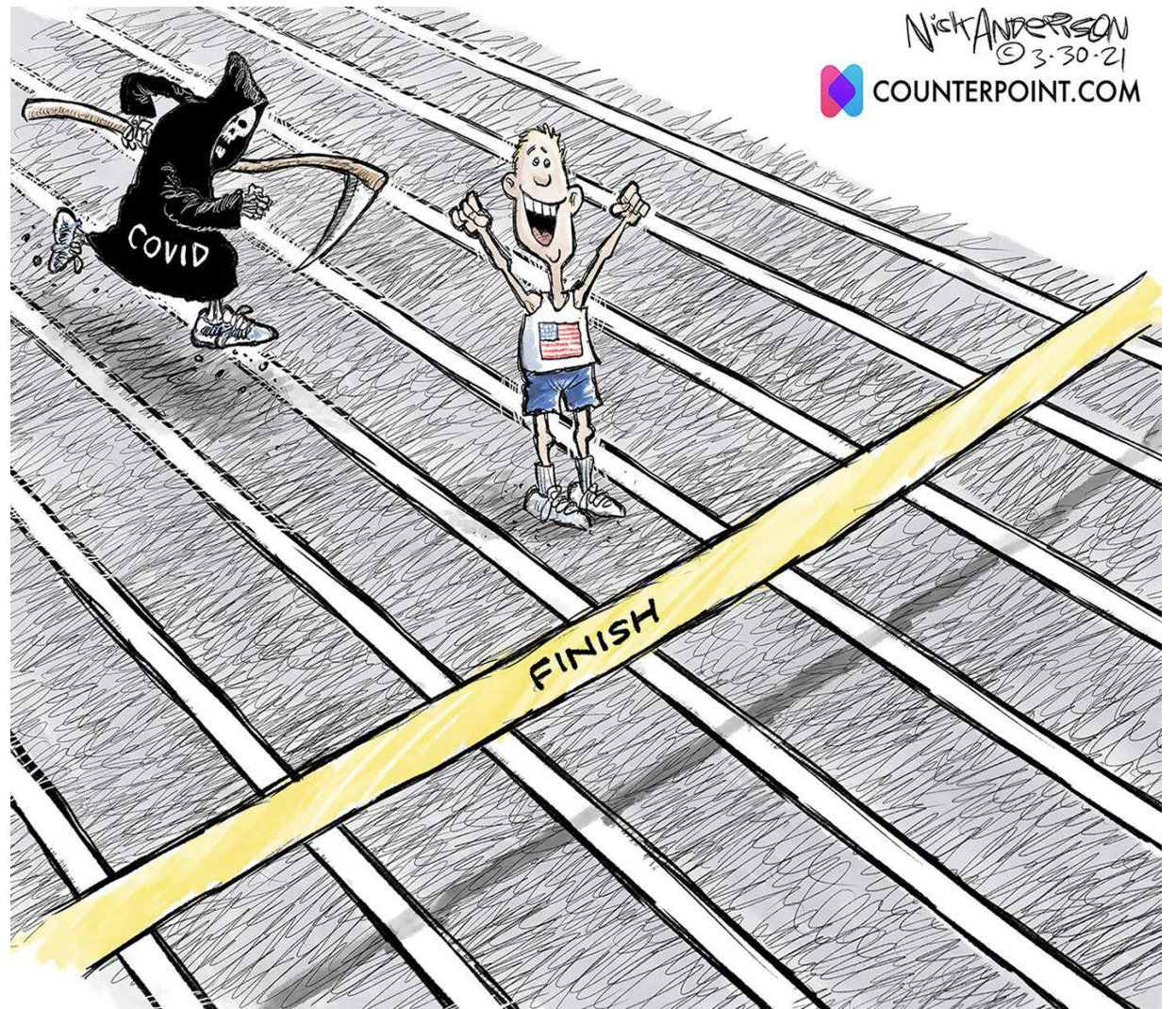
fied in a court decision.

What's right?

If nonunanimous jury verdicts are unconstitutional, it certainly seems unjust that because a case is concluded the unconstitutionality of the verdict does not matter. Retrying cases would put a burden on Oregon's justice system. It would be significant. It could be hundreds of cases or more, as *The Oregonian* reported. Should that burden make a difference? Ideally, no.

But it's hard to argue that if Rosenblum does not have a clear court ruling, yet, she is right to wait. Even if she did not choose to wait, that decision could face court challenges.

It could be years before such a ruling on retroactivity is clear in the Oregon Supreme Court. The U.S. Supreme Court may rule on the matter in July.



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My Nickel's Worth

Provide worker housing

As long as housing prices are inflated by lack of available units, the struggle for affordable housing will continue. A viable option to this condition could be workforce housing. Not a new concept, it began with the industrial revolution and has grown internationally.

St. Charles has some 5,000 employees who struggle with market-priced rents or housing. The city of Bend employs hundreds of office workers, clerks, inspectors and planners, and Bend-La Pine Schools and Bend Park & Recreation District also employ hundreds of people, many with families facing the same financial challenges.

The cost of construction would be greatly reduced since each of those listed here have buildable land available. Imagine the pressure that could be relieved in the housing market if the largest employers provided such living alternatives.

An immediate impact model could be realized at Oregon State University-Cascades and COCC where a portion of on-campus housing could be dedicated to employees.

What are the advantages? Easier access to the workplace, business and services; less travel time; decreased pollution; increased security; easing of anxiety and increased resources for personal and family needs.

By helping to remove some of the pressure for affordable housing, the lives of many of our friends and neighbors could be significantly im-

proved. There are and should be creative answers to today's challenges.

— Don Senecal is a former Bend planning commissioner

Don't shut down farms

Animal activist Scott Beckstead is shamelessly exploiting the pandemic to lobby to shut down Oregon farms. It is important that legislators listen to science, not opportunistic lobbyists. ("Oregon should not allow mink farms," Mar. 20)

The coronavirus has found its way into countless other homes and businesses, and fur farms are no different. Farms, like other businesses, have taken extra precautions during the pandemic. Why would we punish small businesses for being the victims of something out of their control? That's not just bad policy — it's ridiculous.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes, "At this time, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading" the virus that causes COVID-19. Further, "the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low," according to the agency.

Activists like Beckstead are using the pandemic to dress up the same campaign they've been running for decades to shut down the entire fur industry. Keep in mind these animal activists don't think you should be allowed to eat a cheeseburger any more than they think you should be allowed to buy a fur coat. The Legislature should send their bill to the one place

it belongs: The trash can.

— Michael Whelan is executive director of the Fur Commission USA

Thank you for the help

On behalf of the Deschutes County Rural Fire District #2, I wish to express our appreciation to all the fire agencies in the tri-county: Oregon Department of Forestry, U.S. Forest Service, Deschutes County Sheriffs' Office, Red Cross, Oregon State Police, Deschutes County 911 and Taylor NW for the suppression of the two recent wildfires in our district.

We wanted especially to be sure that the crews and support staff that participated in this massive effort know that the residents of our district as well as our elected officials deeply appreciate your response, hard work and professionalism. Without dedicated and highly trained individuals like yourselves the outcome of these fires would have been far more catastrophic.

When circumstances are fraught with danger and when physical communications are challenging to maintain there is a ready formula for disaster. Thus, your efforts in working with multiple agencies under hostile and dangerous circumstances and unfamiliar locations are truly exemplary. Each of you have brought credit to yourself, your colleagues and your profession.

You have our deepest gratitude and utmost personal respect.

— George Roshak is president of the board of Deschutes County Rural Fire Protection District #2

GUEST COLUMN

Pumped energy storage will benefit rural Oregon in new economy

BY RANDY COX

As the Oregon Legislature explores the continued transformation of our state's energy infrastructure to meet goals for sustainability and reliability, we urge them not to overlook the economic opportunity for rural Oregon in this new future.

Rural Oregon has long provided the resources to help fuel our state economy. We are a state of abundant natural resources, and their use has supported good jobs in rural communities for decades. Ensuring the integration of the advantages provided by our raw assets and geographies will support our continued growth through the 21st century.

One of the most important components of creating shared prosperity in our new energy economy will be supporting the development of energy

resources here within Oregon. Our abundance of wind, water, solar and other natural assets can be harnessed to provide good jobs and sustain local communities.

The Oregon Legislature is considering bills this session that would prioritize cleaner forms of electricity. While Klamath Falls and much of rural Oregon use very clean forms of electricity thanks to the region's hydroelectric system, we are aware of the need felt in other parts of the state to transition away from fossil fuel-based electricity. If the Legislature moves forward with clean energy bills this session, we hope they will recognize the important role of long-duration storage and, specifically, pump storage in that policy.

Long-duration storage will play a crucial role in balancing the generation and use of greater amounts of renewable energy in order to keep

the lights on. Long-duration storage bridges the divide between when the wind blows and sun shines when Oregonians need electricity.

Cleaner electricity can and should also result in direct benefits to the local communities and family-wage jobs. Using this policy to strengthen our local economies is a critical way to broaden their appeal and ensure rural Oregon is a full partner in this transition.

One of the facilities this policy would support is the Swan Lake Energy Storage Project in Klamath County. Energy storage ensures the resiliency of our power grid by guaranteeing supply to meet periods of peak demand for electricity — something we are seeing firsthand the importance of right now. The pumped storage used in the project is a proven technology being used around the country to

ensure stability of supply.

Creation of the 400-megawatt project would be a significant economic driver for the region. Over a thousand high-wage jobs in construction would be created during the three- to five-year building process. The project has agreed to a Project Labor Agreement, which helps ensure the use of local workers and workforce skills training for those employed on the project.

Once it is completed, the Swan Lake Energy Project will also significantly boost our economy, contributing \$6.2 million in goods and services and \$1.7 million in labor income annually. This will also support our local government, adding \$31.5 million in property taxes for Klamath County over the next 15 years.

In addition, the project will operate in concert with existing economic ac-

tivities. Agricultural and commercial equipment and vehicles will be able to cross easements without any restrictions, and grazing, irrigating, farming and other activities will resume after construction.

Building a sustainable future does not need to come at the expense of creating a strong economy. Projects like the Swan Lake Energy Project show the potential for jobs and growth across Oregon as we build a better energy future.

That is why it is important for legislators to recognize the importance of policymaking in creating an energy grid that is sustainable in the long term. We urge legislators to ensure these policies prioritize new infrastructure that supports our local economies and creates good jobs across Oregon.

■ Randy Cox is CEO of the Klamath County Economic Development Association.

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