

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERHeidi Wright Publisher
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Commitment to open government should not be half-hearted

Here's an editorial for the people who work in Oregon government. They can be excused for not getting as wound up about government transparency as journalists or other members of the public do.

But Oregon governments from the governor's office down to the dog boards are supposed to be transparent. They are in a number of ways. But they don't always put their heart into it. Sometimes they don't follow the law. So when one part of Oregon government calls out another part of Oregon government for not being transparent, we pay attention.

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office recently released a follow-up to an audit it did in 2019. That original report encouraged the state — and in particular the state's Department of Administrative Services, or DAS, — to enhance the transparency in the state's budget.

If it's not easy to find out where the state gets its money or how it spends it, that's a problem.

The department did implement a number of recommended changes since that 2019 audit. It worked with the Legislature to allow additional money be spent to beef up the state's transparency website. And it hired a consultant to compare what Oregon does against some of the best practices of other states. That's good.

But DAS is not monitoring a practice of state agencies to use non-budgeted positions. And it's not using its position on the Transparency Oregon Advisory Commission to encourage that the commission meet regularly and release transparency reports required by law in a timely manner, the report said.

For instance, there's a requirement in state law that the commission shall report to the Legislature on completed improvements to the transparency website and ways to improve it further by Feb. 15 of each odd-numbered year. The Legislative

The impact of the pandemic on state staff could have certainly been a reason. There could be other parts of a heavy workload that they chose to prioritize. It would be nice, though, if they were transparent about why they aren't filling a transparency obligation required by state law.

Fiscal Office missed that deadline in 2019. It apparently has missed it again this year. At least, we couldn't find it on office's website.

We emailed on Wednesday the two members of the Legislative Fiscal Office assigned to the commission to ask what was going on. No response.

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One other thing struck us about the way the Department of Administrative Services — which it is important to note is overseen by Gov. Kate Brown — responded to the audit. DAS chose to respond to some of the audit recommendations with what state auditors called "extraneous responses." DAS declined to even disagree or agree with some of the audit recommendations.

Do some employees at DAS not have a commitment to transparency in their heart? Is Gov. Brown going to insist they act like they do?

Measure would transform Oregon farm practices

A ballot measure proposed for the Oregon ballot in November 2022 could mean a big change for the state's farmers. Many common farm practices such as killing livestock or artificial insemination would become crimes.

Initiative Petition 13 still has hoops it must get through before it ends up on the ballot, but farm groups are concerned and pushing back. The Capital Press has a good article about it.

IP 13, as it's called in state lingo, does not ban the sale of meat, leather or fur in Oregon. But a farmer would have to wait until an animal dies naturally before it could be pro-

cessed and distributed. Proponents say it just makes farmers subject to the same standards as everyone else when it comes to animal cruelty. And they are correct in a way, but that would also be a threat to the livelihood of farmers across the state — let alone what you might find on shelves of stores.

We don't know if supporters will gather enough signatures to get it on the ballot. But it's a possible measure that is worth doing your homework on. There is information from proponents here: yesonip13.org. Opponents at the Oregon Farm Bureau have information here: oregonfb.org/ip13.

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.



My Nickel's Worth

Switch us to clean energy

I would like to thank Sen. Ron Wyden for his service to the state of Oregon and our nation, and encourage him to continue to take action to create change in order to power Oregon and the U.S. with 100% clean energy. Sen. Wyden has risen as a leader on sustainable practices: working on a just transition toward a renewable energy future and ensuring relief for Oregon communities impacted by natural disasters exacerbated by the changing climate.

Sen. Wyden has introduced and supported bills to protect Oregon's rivers, improve soil health and crop resilience, ban U.S. oil exports, create millions of good-paying jobs in repairing America's infrastructure and reduce air and water pollution. These actions are among the many that have shown that Sen. Wyden is in favor of climate legislation and community resiliency that puts the planet and its people before the profit of unsustainable and outdated businesses.

As the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and a senior member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Sen. Wyden has the ability to not only understand the importance of transitioning to a clean energy economy but also the connections to take action and provide funding for this transition. In particular, Wyden has the opportunity to help ensure strong climate action in President Biden's American Job Plan.

We need bold climate legislation that promotes the transition to a clean energy economy and I am confident that Sen. Wyden will step up to help

lead this integral project.

— Sydney Dedrick, Bend

Protect the Owyhee

In 1988, our founder Gary Fish established a small brewpub downtown and named it after the iconic waterway flowing through town. At Deschutes Brewery, we depend on healthy forests, protected public lands, and clean, free-flowing water to brew our world-class beer. It's simple — our business depends on the protection of wild places. Our business and Oregon's outdoor recreation-based industry is thrilled to see Sen. Wyden's community-driven, Oregon-crafted solutions for protecting the places we all play.

Deschutes Brewery is crafted for community, and community is something Sen. Wyden understands well. From his statewide call for nominations leading to an Oregonian-built River Democracy Act, to convening stakeholder groups in eastern Oregon to produce the Malheur Community Empowerment for the Owyhee Act, Deschutes Brewery applauds Sen. Wyden's efforts to preserve Oregon's natural resources for future generations. Sen. Wyden's Owyhee proposal will protect recreational assets and important wildlife habitat, and provide vital economic development opportunities that support local Malheur County economies and communities. Oregon's Owyhee Canyonlands are a true gem and we hope to see a bill passed this year that gives this place the protection it has so long deserved.

— Michael LaLonde is the president and CEO of Bend-based Deschutes Brewery

Shield deer migration corridors

This spring, I killed my first mule deer buck. If you are a hunter like me, you should be outraged that my first buck was killed out of season. Unfortunately, it turns out many deer are killed in Central Oregon every spring by hunters and non-hunters alike who, like me, are simply driving through a migration corridor that's been in place for centuries, which is bisected by up to 28,000 vehicles a day traveling at 65 miles per hour along Highway 97.

Each spring, Central Oregon's mule deer decide to pick up and move out of their winter range in the sage brush-covered High Desert and head west toward the mountains. The Cascades provide summer food in the form of shrubs and grasses that give fawns and their mothers the energy they need to make it through the long winter yet to come. These long-established movements are at risk of crumbling apart as uncontrolled development in places like Central Oregon continues to truncate and cut off their paths.

Fortunately, conservation-minded hunting and angling groups are working together to find balanced solutions that allow for the migration of game and continued sustainable development. These groups are working on an approach to protect these corridors through an eventual statewide migration policy. As scientists continue to learn more precisely where big game migrate, we should use this knowledge to conserve these corridors before they are gone.

— Isaac O'Casey, Bend

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

Conservation opportunities in the Owyhee Canyonlands

BY MICHAEL O'CASEY

This spring, my family and I ventured out to the Owyhee Canyonlands to view one of the strangest mating rituals that takes place anywhere.

Lekking sage-grouse. A lek is a place where male sage-grouse return to every spring to perform some of the best bird dancing moves in the West. Biologists rely on these lek sites to monitor population trends for these important and increasingly rare birds.



O'Casey

In 2020, Oregon's sage-grouse population was estimated at 14,200 birds, which is the second-lowest population count recorded.

Waking up in the pre-dawn desert light and hiking across sagebrush to see these birds dance for a mate is an experience that should be near the top of every Oregonians outdoor recre-

ation bucket list, and there is no better place than the Owyhee to make it happen. The 4.6 million acres of public lands that are part of the Vale BLM District provide some of the best remaining sage-grouse habitat left. This corner of Southeast Oregon has been identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as one of just six focal areas across the bird's range and keeping the sage-steppe habitat healthy is critical to their survival. Fortunately, there are two current opportunities to conserve the wild country of the Owyhee and the intact habitat it provides.

The first opportunity started in 2010 when the Vale District began a public process to amend their Resource Management Plan.

These RMP's guide the management across all 4.6 million acres of public land for the life of the plan, which is usually 20 years or more. Through this amendment process, there is an opportunity for the BLM to conserve this wild and remote landscape by limiting development such

GUEST COLUMN

as renewable energy. Additionally, the BLM is analyzing changes to off highway vehicle and grazing management.

The draft RMP amendment was published in May 2019, and unfortunately, the BLM's preferred alternative proposed that 0 additional acres be managed for conservation values even though more than 1.2 million acres were identified by the BLM as wild, backcountry lands.

The BLM is reviewing more than 4,000 public comments that were submitted about the draft plan. The bulk of those comments asked the BLM to make changes to their proposal and to conserve these wild landscapes. With the recent shift in the administration, the BLM has a great opportunity to make changes between the 2019 draft plan and the soon to be released, proposed final plan. These changes should incorporate additional conservation measures that are supported

by a broad group of local stakeholders through the Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council.

The second opportunity to conserve this landscape is by working with Oregon's senators and congressmen and -women to pass a bill that would permanently protect the wild-est portions of the Owyhee.

In 2019, Oregon's senior Sen. Ron Wyden worked feverishly with dozens of stakeholders to craft Senate Bill 2828. This bill would protect more than one million acres of the Owyhee as Wilderness and provide needed local economic development opportunities and funding for ecological restoration to keep this landscape intact for future generations. Sen. Wyden is working to reintroduce this bill later this year. Thousands of Oregon's hunters and anglers like me who value this landscape look forward to continuing our work with Sen. Wyden, Congressman Bentz and others to find a compromise in the Owyhee through the passage of a bill like this.

The solitude and the quiet that is found in this remote canyon country is one of the finest values any place can offer. But right now is not the time to be quiet about conserving the Owyhee.

The solitude and the quiet that is found in this remote canyon country is one of the finest values any place can offer. But right now is not the time to be quiet about conserving the Owyhee. Learn more about how to speak up and engage by joining the Owyhee Sportsmen's Coalition and/or contacting your senators today.

Successful conservation through the above opportunities will make sure we are always able to find birds dancing in the desert with every spring.

■ Michael O'Casey live in Bend and is the Oregon/Washington field representative for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.