EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER
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Don't be that guy this Fourth of July

The guy who lit 10 acres of Pilot Butte on fire with illegal fireworks in 2018 didn't mean to do it.

He didn't mean for people to have to evacuate their homes.

He didn't mean that people's power would be cut off.

He didn't mean that U.S. Highway 20 would have to be blocked.

He didn't think he would go to jail.

He fought the tens of thousands of dollars in restitution he was ordered to pay.

He thought he knew what he was doing when he lit the fuse.

Don't be that guy this year.

The rules against fireworks in Bend have been a kind of lightly enforced farce.

Window-rattling booms. Rockets charging into the sky. We aren't talking about the professional, supervised show from Pilot Butte. We are talking about amateurs firing off illegal fireworks in neighborhoods for fun.

Bend police officers have never had time to chase down every illegal launch, racing from scene to scene writing $750 tickets. For the most part, the community has to rely on people obeying the rules.

Some people don't. It's a celebration. It's nostalgic. It's patriotic. Add danger and it's a fiery brew people can't resist.

City officials have been debating what to do about fireworks since, well, Bend became a city. "The city council seems disposed to reduce the menace of the Fourth of July celebration by preventing the firing of firecrackers and other fireworks in the business district of Bend." That's from The Bend Bulletin in 1905.

This year, the danger is about as bad as it can be. The heat. The drought. Shoot off fireworks and we are just one mistake away from putting firefighters in danger and much, much worse.

Use of fireworks is banned in the city of Bend through July 9. They still can be sold, of course, which doesn't help matters. Professional fireworks displays at Vince Genna Stadium on July 3 and Pilot Butte State Park on July 4 will continue normally.

Don't be that guy.

Should Bend push more than the state?

The Earth is going to need to last us a long time. So this year Oregon legislators passed House Bill 2021.

It sets new goals for renewable energy. Basically the state's big electrical providers have until 2040 to get their greenhouse gas emissions to zero.

A Bend city working group met Monday and considered if the city should be more aggressive. Bend could do more. It could through HB 2021 go sooner down the path. It's what is called a community green tariff: require everyone in Bend to buy green energy.

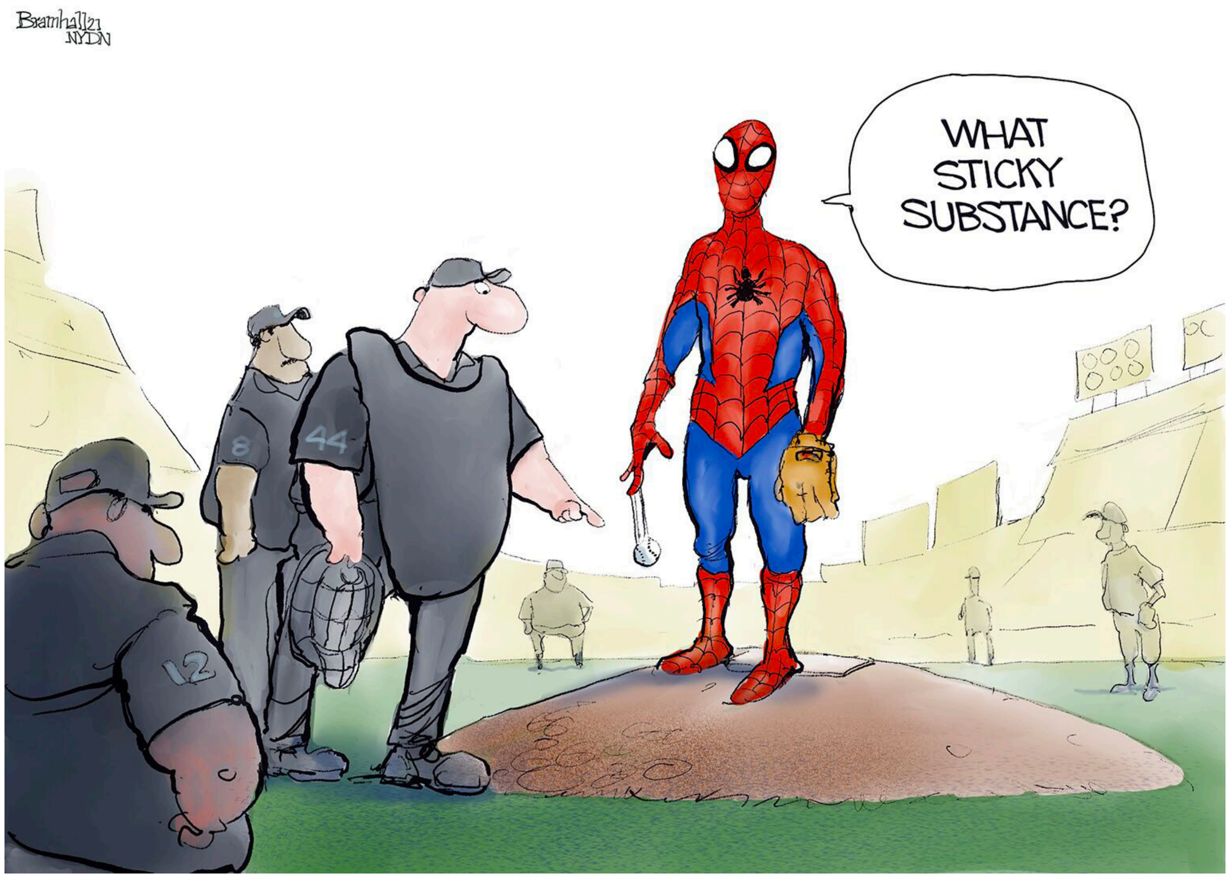
Many people can do that now. Sign up for Pacific Power's Blue Sky program. Pay more to do more for the environment. The problem is, of course, people who are comfortably well off can do that comfortably. People who are living paycheck to paycheck cannot.

The same issue applies if Bend were to pursue a community green tariff. Bend already has a high cost of living. The city would look to increase it further? There would be ways to subsidize the increases for people with lower incomes — by charging people with higher incomes more.

Another idea the working group discussed Monday was about builders using natural gas heating in new homes. Should the city incentivize builders to use electricity instead? Should the city require it? Is there a way to generate incentives for people to switch what they already have? Where would the money come from?

The city working group — a subset of the city's Environment and Energy Climate Committee — didn't come to any firm conclusions. But the full committee does make policy recommendations to the Bend City Council. So when the working group talks about something it's not outlandish to think that's what the full committee might propose to the Bend City Council. If you have an opinion about these issues, you can reach members of the Bend City Council at council@bendoregon.gov.

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.



GUEST COLUMN

Rethink removal of Klamath River dams

BY WILLIAM E. SIMPSON II

For the past six years I have been studying and writing about the proposed Klamath River dams removal project and its impacts on the environment and localized threatened and endangered species in the Klamath River Canyon where the Copco and Iron Gate lakes are.

The lake and shoreline-based ecosystems of Copco and Iron Gate lakes also provide critical habitat for both threatened and endangered species of flora and fauna. The 11 miles of the Klamath River Canyon where these lakes are located contains an amazing diversity of wildlife, including 89 species of birds and 71 species of plants including trees, grasses and forbs.

Over the past few weeks, I have in greater depth examined what has been proposed, including the costs of the project to remove the hydroelectric dams — three in Siskiyou County, California, and one in Oregon.

It has become clear to me, even in light of the recent Federal Energy Regulatory Commission decision, that the project is no longer viable based upon the projected budget of $450 million, estimated in 2012.

Shockingly, the same cost projection is being promoted to legislators and taxpayers in Oregon and California today by Klamath River Renewal Corp.

That now obsolete cost estimate for the Klamath River dams removal project was made 8 years before the dramatic impacts of COVID on the costs and delivery times for everything from fuel, to materials, to labor and even project insurance.

Graph analyses explaining rapidly escalating costs and economic impacts by the Associated General Contractors of America related to construction projects exemplifies the huge cost increases and long delays that have occurred since COVID (www.agc.org/sites/default/files/AGC 2021 Inflation Alert — Ver1.1.pdf).

"The construction industry is currently experiencing an unprecedented mix of steeply rising materials prices, snarled supply chains and staffing difficulties, combined with slumping demand that is keeping many contractors from passing on their added costs," according to the report. "This combination threatens to push some firms out of business and add to the industry's nearly double-digit unemployment rate. The situation calls for immediate action by federal trade officials to end tariffs and quotas that are adding to price increases and supply shortages.

"Officials at all levels of government need to identify and remove or lessen any unnecessary or excessive impediments to the importation, domestic production, transport and delivery of construction materials and products.

"Project owners need to recognize how much conditions have changed for projects begun or awarded in the early days of the pandemic or before and to consider providing greater flexibility and cost-sharing. Contractors should become even more vigilant about changes in materials costs and expected delivery dates and should communicate the information promptly to current and prospective clients.

"This report is intended to provide all parties with better understanding of the current situation, the impact on construction firms and projects, its likely course in the next several months, and possible steps to mitigate the damage."

It seems certain the prior cost estimate for the Klamath Dams Removal project by KRRC is now obsolete, and that a new estimate, based upon the current data related to costs might be on the order of $800 million.

And, the timeline for the project is arguably no longer valid as well; as delays happen, which as we read will surely occur, costs will increase even further.

Will Oregon and California taxpayers be subjected to this boondoggle?

The economic hardship related to this potential price tag, coupled with increasing liabilities that the project would place on taxpayers of Oregon and California, coupled with potential devastation to the environment and rare species of flora and fauna demands that the Klamath Dam removal project be reevaluated top-to-bottom!

We must demand that legislators in Oregon and California hold public hearings on the matter ASAP!

William E. Simpson II is a naturalist studying the wildlife in the area around the Klamath Dams. He is the author of two published books and more than 100 published articles on subjects related to wild horses, wildlife, wildfire, and public land management. More at www.WHFB.us. This column originally appeared in the Capital Press.

Letters policy: Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

Motivate the economy to work on net zero carbon emissions

BY BRENDA PACE

Editor's note: *This is the final in a series of four columns on climate change and potential legislation that may give readers information they can take action on in the effort to meet carbon emission reduction goals.*

The Oregon Department of Water Resource's recent report, "Groundwater Resource Concerns" described the Deschutes River Basin as a watershed of concern. Water levels in wells are dropping east, north and south of Bend. Some areas can blame the piping of canals or increased development, but as far back as 2008, Marshal Gannett of the U.S. Geological Survey said, "We found, depending on where you are, these things have different influences … Climate was the biggest cause of decline."


Pace

After three articles in this series, it's time for a summary. First, at 419 parts per million the level of carbon is higher than seen in human history and climbing. Carbon is the cause of increasing heat and the associated weather. Second, the United States has not coalesced around atmospheric carbon through either government expenditures, regulations or a carbon price.

If expenditure legislation can be passed, the most productive measure would be to improve the electrical grid to support the electrification of much of transport and industry. Since local electrical utilities are regulated by state commissions that often mandate low retail prices, they are unable to achieve the task unaided.

A regulation to use low carbon processes in industries such as steel and concrete while in the process of improving our infrastructure would be positive.

A carbon price would cost fossil fuel producers $15 per ton of carbon content initially, thereafter increasing by $10 a year. The logic of a carbon price is clear — when the price of carbon climbs higher, use less and at a certain price, none at all. The revenues are largely returned to households.

Climate scientists have estimated that to avoid the worst effects of climate change, we must achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 (International Panel on Climate Change). Net zero means any carbon emitted will be sequestered. Sequestration means carbon is captured in products (like cement), soils, plants and underground. By 2050 then, the atmosphere would be carbon neutral, plateauing and beginning to decline.

Significantly, the aforementioned IPCC projections and virtually all climate models assume a price on carbon because it is the most effective instrument to achieve net zero by 2050, according to scientists and economists.

Scientists and economists, however, are not alone. A multitude of businesses share a preference for carbon pricing including the United States Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, the American Bankers Association, Financial Services Forum, the American Property Casualty Association, the Commodity Futures Association, and most recently, the American Petroleum Association.

What do these huge associations and their many members see in a carbon price? In their announcements, they describe it as sustaining industry, as predictable and durable (endures for the transition to net zero), countrywide (not scattered jurisdictions), and supporting innovation and free enterprise.

Most importantly, a carbon price creates a level playing field on which business can compete. With the same rules and risks, everyone can invest. For example, business investment can share in the upgrading of the electrical grid, not just taxpayers and ratepayers. With a carbon price, markets and investors can help to finance new technology, innovation and production throughout the economy.

Some believe that establishing a carbon price that encourages the economy to reduce carbon will allow big business to game the system and rig the outcome. Sure, big companies can control their markets short term but not long term. Standard and Poor's index of 500 of the biggest companies is illustrative in that 400 have been replaced by more successful companies over the last 50 years. Business must adjust as cost and demand changes. Further, the simplicity of charging at the source of production for fossil fuels leaves little room for avoidance or manipulation.

As for jobs, we should note how far green industry has come. Jobs in all kinds of renewables are already equal to 70% of all fossil fuel jobs (2020 U.S. Energy & Employment Report).

Again, a carbon price structure that returns a dividend to households ensures that it is not a drag on consumer spending. An estimate by the Department of the Treasury for 2017 set revenue at $60 billion which would work out to about $400 per household initially and $1,200 or more after four years. This is important since personal expenditures constitute 68% of the American economy (Federal Reserve of St Louis). Such a structure supports both households and employment.

Finally, many local politicians support a carbon price. For example, the Oregon Senate passed Senate Joint Resolution 5 which names the Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act, HR 2307, my personal favorite. Utah's current and former House members have announced their support and polling shows that a significant majority of the population does too.

So, what to do? Changing your personal carbon footprint is, of course, beneficial, but we need national policy to bend the curve on carbon emissions. Please make a phone call, send an email, schedule a visit to U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, Rep. Cliff Bentz or send a card to President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, EPA Administrator Michael Regan or Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm. You can join Citizens Climate Lobby with a working chapter right here in Bend.

Brenda Pace is retired from Pace Research Co., a regional economics consultancy, and the Center for Natural Lands Management, a habitat management nonprofit for endangered species responsible for more than 75,000 acres.