

Use common sense before water woes swamp the West

The folks in Klamath Falls are hoping for the best. As they look at a sparse snowpack in the mountains and a forecast for another dry summer, they maintain their optimism.

They say they've seen it before — in 2001, '02 and '03 — and despite the outlook they remain optimistic that somehow enough water will remain available for their crops.

Like the rest of the West, the Klamath region's economy depends on water. Without adequate water, the farms and ranches, and the economy that depends on them, face another difficult year.

But the sad irony is that such hardships could have been avoided. Common sense could have helped them.

Common sense dictates that a region with periodic water shortages should have more storage. Reservoirs, aquifer recharge, lake taps and any other practical means of storing water that is often plentiful in the winter but scarce in the summer need to be pursued. Yet precious little has been done at the federal, state or local levels to create more storage.

The problem is not unique to the Klamath Falls region. Pick a state in the West, and the lack of adequate water storage is the primary problem facing agriculture. In California, it's becoming a challenge that crosses urban-rural lines, affecting a broad range of water users.

The debate over climate change and its causes continues, but the ramifications are clear: growing contention

over a valuable resource that's in limited supply. One part of that discussion should focus on water storage.

When winter precipitation comes in the form of rain instead of mountain snows, common sense dictates that some of it should be stored, yet only a few storage projects are in the works around the West.

In California, spurred by a four-year drought, voters have approved the construction of two reservoirs. However, state leaders haven't even decided where to build them. Elsewhere, a few small reservoirs and aquifer recharge projects are contemplated or are underway.

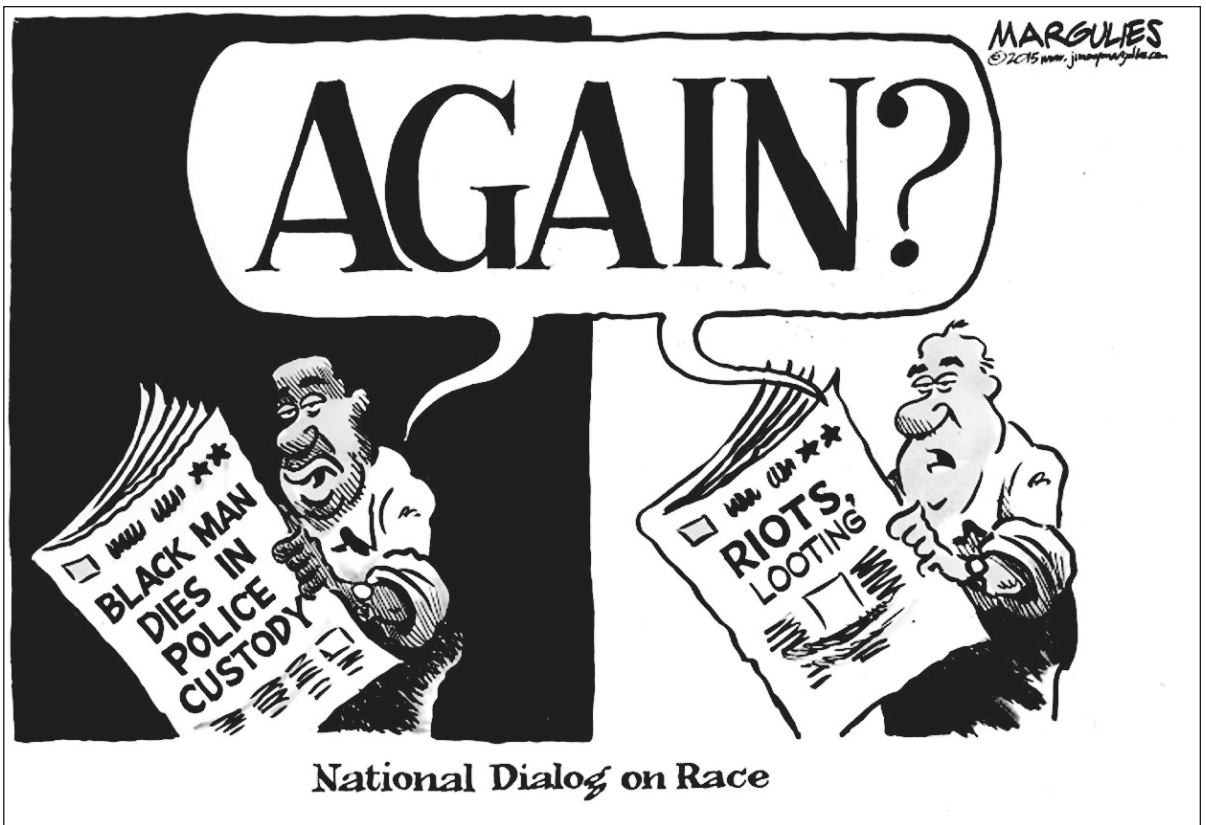
Such projects are desperately needed, and now.

The federal Endangered Species Act also plays a role in our water crises, pitting water for fish and other species against the needs of the people. Billions of dollars have been spent on helping fish, while little has been spent in the past 40 years on water storage.

If farmers and ranchers want a preview of where this is headed, they don't have to look far. Western and Southern Oregon depended on the timber industry for generations, yet they have struggled to survive after the northern spotted owl was listed as threatened under the ESA.

But no matter what one's viewpoint is on the ESA or climate change, all sides should agree that more water storage is desperately needed across the West.

It's a matter of common sense.



National Dialog on Race

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Out of bounds

To the Editor:

Do you want your access to public lands treated like a basketball game, where you have to worry about if you are "in bounds" or "out of bounds" and have to live with the penalties of not staying within the boundaries set forth by the Forest Service? That is exactly what your life will be if the proposed designation of routes language and travel management plan are put into place on our national forest.

Currently you are allowed to openly and freely access the Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur National Forest via motorized means at your discretion unless otherwise noted by wilderness areas or areas specifically targeted as non-motorized.

Once roads areas are designated, all motorized use off those roads will be prohibited (within a given buffer along the road), going from an open forest system to a closed forest system.

Much like the basketball court where you are not allowed to leave the court, motorized access will be disallowed from roughly 95 percent of your public lands. You may only play on the court the Forest Service allows, which will be along their selected roads, and if you play outside those lines, you will be penalized up to \$5,000 and/or one year in jail.

When did you turn over your right of motorized access to the Forest Service? Did any of you sign a document giving Mr. Montoya or Mr. Pena the authority to decide when and where you traveled?

Offenses will get you penalized if you go outside the designated area for firewood cutting, retrieving big game, dispersed camping, accessing historic berry and mushroom picking areas, accessing historic hunting areas, or simply recreating in your favorite area, just to name a few.

If you do not agree that our motorized access should be restricted, please let Secretary Tom Vilsack (tom.vilsack@usda.gov) and Robert Bonnie (robert.bonnie@usda.gov) know how their staff is failing our communities and families.

John George
Bates

A police state?

To the Editor:

When the Forest Service uses my tax dollars to publish environmental documents restricting access to public lands and, in a petty personal vendetta, marginalizes the important role of a local law enforcement officer, then I want my damn money back. The same document contains

hundreds of pages of indecipherable jargon the average person cannot wade through, including burn plans encompassing Galena cemetery.

When the Forest Service uses my federal tax dollars to turn my public forest into a police state, I want my money back and that of my ancestors from time immemorial.

Discouraged from submitting a newspaper commentary, I was amused to see a member of the Forest Service-fed Blue Mountain Forest Partners (BMFP) given editorial license to support their far-flung forest management efforts. No indication of credentials for BMFP originators wanting to "help wisely manage the national forest." The main organization is composed of people primarily from out of state or metropolitan origin who provided input for local Forest Service documents.

They have "loggers, timber company and service contract reps, retired Forest Service employees, ranchers and others" to lend them credence. The local Citizens for Public Access group is comprised of a sizable representation of loggers, retired Forest Service employees, ranchers, and local long-established citizenry fully capable of governing their own national forest.

It was stated that the BMFP was formed 10 years ago to end the timber wars that were strangling the local economy. The only thing strangling the local economy was the Forest Service's stranglehold on timber harvest. Then the "hype that we are being locked out of the forest."

Here's news: by FS definition, Level 1 roads are closed roads and they constitute a major percent of all roads in all projects. There may be trouble in paradise because reportedly the BMFP cannot get full group consensus on road reduction issues for their draft vegetation recommendation document resulting from the fact that the Forest Service road closures are sometimes lacking the background science or site specific rationale for closures.

Judy Kerr
Canyon City

Teach respect, boundaries

To the Editor:

I appreciated the April 29 column, "Grant County Should Take Lead ... and Talk About It," by Matt Ipson. I cannot add to his excellent comments except in one area: "We can all play a role in modeling healthy behaviors, promoting positive skills, and creating safe environments."

To apply this concept for teens requires personal awareness out in

the community where inappropriate behavior can pop up at any time. For example, I personally have overheard men at checkout counters in John Day make sexual innuendos, or make what they think are humorous suggestive comments, or personal remarks about a woman's appearance when they think others cannot hear them. Usually the woman just completes the transaction without comment. Her conditioning may be, "oh well, he is just that way," or "he is a local business owner so don't make an issue about it," even if she is uncomfortable.

How can we allow ourselves as adults to be assaulted this way in the marketplace, workplace, even volunteer environments and then talk to teens about how to treat each other in personal relationships? How do we teach our youth about respect for themselves, others and boundaries when we won't demand it for ourselves?

Leslie Barnett
Long Creek

Pot's healing powers

To the Editor:

I can no longer be silent and allow more lies and deception to be uttered about marijuana. Our country has been denied this wonderful plant for almost a century and it is past time for the truth. The prohibition was started with a systematic program of lies and deceit fueled by greed and bigotry.

We are smarter than that now, and the majority of the country now knows the truth that the government has been lying to us about marijuana. The federal government took a patent on the healing medicine in marijuana over 30 years ago!

Anyone can now go on their computer and see literally thousands of articles and testimonials of the healing powers of this plant, with virtually no harmful side effects, unlike pharmaceuticals.

It is time to come out of the dark ages and end the bigotry and lies and start the healing. Stop demonizing the patients that desperately need this medicine. Stop incarcerating patients and anyone that chooses to use this virtually harmless plant.

The government has funded hundreds of studies in the past to try and prove negative things about marijuana, to no avail; they are now funding the miraculous healing properties and the truth is being revealed. Educate yourselves, heal yourselves, go in peace.

Rick McDonough
Monument



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