

Congress has a choice on Federal Forest Act

The time has come for Congress to provide the legal and financial tools the U.S. Forest Service needs to better manage the 188.4 million acres of national forests.

For decades the Forest Service did a world-class job of managing national forests under the multiple-use doctrine. Then, under the Clinton administration and now under the Obama administration, management of the national forests shifted to a doctrine of benign neglect, as timber sales and grazing tapered off and catastrophic wildfires multiplied.

This year 54,493 wildfires burned 9.1 million acres of national forests — including 110,000 acres in Grant County — and the Forest Service spent \$1.7 billion fighting them.

As the understory became clogged with brush, logging slowed to a crawl and grazing was reduced, the forests became overstocked with fuels.

Here's the problem. The nation's taxpayers are not only stuck with the bill for putting out the fires, but the money is taken out of the budget used for clearing brush and treating areas that are vulnerable to wildfires.

The result has been a cycle of bigger wildfires and smaller budgets aimed at preventing them.

A proposal in the U.S. House offers a starting point for breaking this cycle of neglect.

The Resilient Federal Forest Act of 2015, HR 2647, would allow the Forest Service to get money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to fight wildfires.

The bill also eases the yoke of environmental overkill that the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management struggle with as they try to manage forests to prevent wildfires, insect infestations and disease. The agencies are currently

hobbled by federal laws that require expensive environmental reviews. HR 2647 would exclude from National Environmental Policy Act review parts of projects in areas up to 15,000 acres, allowing them to proceed without unnecessary and expensive delays.

"Depending on funding, it can take a couple of years to complete projects and they can take up to 250 pages of environmental review," said Nick Smith, executive director of Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities. The Forest Service alone spends \$356 million a year to jump through NEPA-induced hoops.

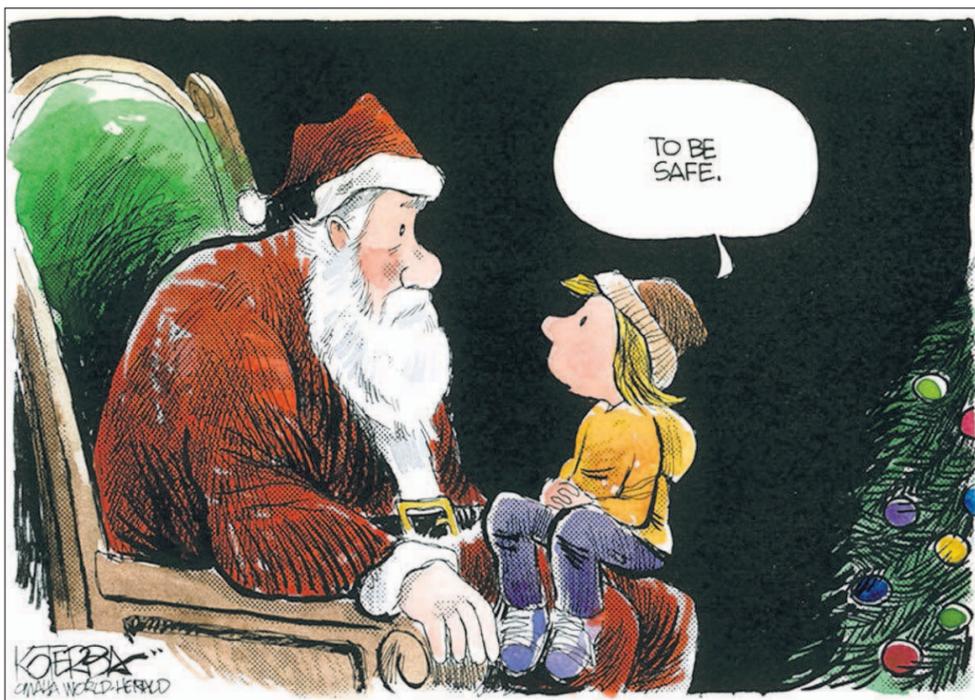
"This isn't about taking away environmental protections, but making them faster and more efficient," said Travis Joseph, president of the American Forest Resources Council, one of 170 organizations that support the legislation.

When it comes to reducing wildfire threats, timber harvests are part of the picture. About 2.5 billion board feet are logged each year in national forests. That's down from 8 billion to 12 billion board feet in the 1960s and 1970s.

Though the bill has passed the House, its future in the Senate is less than certain. The current thinking is that it can be included in other legislation that Congress needs to pass before adjourning at the end of the year.

Congress has a choice. It can either pass this legislation, or a variation of it, or it can do nothing. If it chooses to pass the legislation and President Obama signs it, the Forest Service can more effectively manage the national forests.

If Congress chooses not to pass the bill, you can count on finding more signs similar to one seen recently in the Northwest: "Public lands. Log it, graze it or watch it burn."



American Dream is the reality of self-governance

My dear friends, I write to you on the measure concerning the outlawing of cannabis entrepreneurship.

I am a leader. The truest and most effective form of leadership is leading by example. I know that my children will not become addicts because neither their mother, nor I, am. Further, this is not due to biological relations nor physical presence on its own. I know this because we raise our children. We raise them to become the strongest version of their selves. We do this from the front, by example, by always continuing in our quest to become the strongest version of ourselves. Addiction is victimhood, a foreign concept that is nearly non-existent in the mind of a true leader. There exists no threat to our youth so long as we raise leaders.

If you treat a child like an irresponsible, unintelligent, irrational and unaccountable fool, that is what you shall have. If you treat a child like an adult he'll be more responsible by the time he's 12 than the majority of "adults" you know. If you treat Americans like children, then you shall have a nation of "adults" who believe they are the embodiment of victims. If you start treating Americans for the good moral people that they are, that is exactly what you shall have.

It is because I love my fellow Americans that I'm not only willing to let them fail, I want them to fail. I want this for them because I know they will never succeed without first experiencing failure. If you yearn for the American Dream, as I do, if you believe in a country of individuals

taking pride in their never-ending successes and failures in the pursuit of their unique forms of peaceful happiness, if you are a creature of integrity, this is the only position: Self-ownership.

Belief in authority is a failure to believe in one's self; a lack of conviction in one's own capabilities and actions. Through belief in ourselves and our compatriots, through respect of ourselves and our fellow citizens, we will bring America back to the greatness that Jefferson penned in 1776.

Self-medication is not a foreign concept to this country. Nearly every hard-working rancher, farmer, logger and every other hard-working laborer that I know self-medicates. Whether it be drink, smoke or that prescription you allowed your doctor to give to you in order to treat the symptoms of a larger issue: humans self-medicate. Whether it be your back, your knees, those joints you didn't even know existed till you felt pain, or perhaps a simple short vacation from responsibility, to give them peace where it's found wanting.

The American Dream, is not a dream. It isn't as simple as successes and happiness, rainbows and butterflies where everything is easy and great. The American reality is about accountability. It's about loving one's self so much that we choose the decisions that will make us the happiest in life, it's the pursuit of happiness. Through pain and suffering we become strong. We create strength through the adversity that comes with making our lives.

Americans used to understand

that and they still understood it during prohibition. We can deduce this because there was no prohibition in reality. They said 'This is ridiculous!' We are individually responsible creatures. We own ourselves. We make our decisions, we will live or we will die by our own distinctive choices. The problem is, as with most things in life, government. This belief in external authority. A belief that contradicts and undermines self-ownership. The American Dream is the reality of self-governance.

Too many humans view selfishness in a negative light. They have forgotten what other traits Americans have. We are a Socratic body of beings. We hold in the highest order of principles integrity and community. They have forgotten what human beings are. We're loving beings, we're compassionate, we're pack animals and we have no strength when standing alone. We must stand shoulder to shoulder as individuals. I believe in the American Dream. I know that my countrymen are compassionate, empathetic, loving, good, moral and ethical. Therefore, the most selfish decisions, the choices we take to make us who we are are the most compassionate, the most empathetic and the most loving. The most caring choices we make to benefit mankind are the most selfish. Generosity is the ultimate happiness.

I challenge you, my compatriots, to make the selfish choice in every facet of life. Be happy in the pursuit itself.

James Vaughan
Long Creek.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Give the wolf killer a medal

To the Editor:

This isn't just a letter to the editor, but to everyone who might be concerned with common sense justice.

Recently, an individual shot and killed a wolf while mistaking it for a coyote. He was honest in that he told the ODFW what he did.

He subsequently has been charged with killing an endangered species and is being threatened with a fine, or jail time, or maybe both — who knows right now.

In the first place, these animals are not endangered, never have been and probably never will be. Isn't that pathetic. Instead of prosecuting the man for being honest, he instead should be given a medal for removing a killing machine that, along with other members of its species, is costing our economy millions of dollars. These animals are the ISIS of the animal world.

Why in the world are wolves so glorified? Every time one of these killing machines kills a sheep or cow

or horse, or anything, for that matter, they heap misery, worry and a lot of expense on the receiver. Our big game animals are suffering more than any other and when they suffer, the ODFW suffers, because when there are no animals to hunt, hunters do not buy licenses and tags. What kind of message does the prosecution of this man having been honest deliver to our young people? It will teach them to shoot, shovel and shut up, and that is what will be done from now on.

So, instead of spending time and money on a senseless prosecution, just give the man a medal.

Dean Elliott
Prairie City

Good news: Beer calories, salt content

To the Editor:

After all the bad news this past summer there were two items in the national news the past few days that might cheer the folks in Grant County. We sometimes forget the big picture when we become so involved in the

mundane. Things like forest road closures, firewood rules, grazing permits, warming streams, forest fires, etc. It is nice to see that our dedicated government representatives are constantly seeking ways to make our lives better.

The first among the items that caught my ear was that our president just released 2,000 new regulations that will go into effect on Jan 1. Among the more important is a requirement that all beer brewers disclose the calorie count of their brew. The other is the state of California now requires that restaurants list the salt contents of each menu item. Even though that will not affect us here in Oregon with any luck it will be picked up by the folks in Salem or Washington D.C., so that we too can reap the benefits.

It was mentioned in the item about calories in beer that this may bring about the closure of some micro brewers due to the cost. But as we sip our Budweiser and munch our fries we can all bask in the glow of knowing that someone up there cares about our well being!

Claude Baker
John Day

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Grant County's Weekly Newspaper

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- 1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION RATES**
(including online access)
- Grant County\$40
 - Everywhere else in U.S.....\$51
 - Outside Continental U.S.....\$60
- Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER
send address changes to:
Blue Mountain Eagle
195 N. Canyon Blvd.
John Day, OR 97845-1187

USPS 226-340

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