

Reviving northern ambulances benefits all of Grant County

The return of volunteer ambulance services in Monument and Long Creek is good news for all of Grant County.

In a county so sparsely populated, where the nearest doctor may be more than an hour away, ambulance response times may mean the difference between life and death.

For years, the county had been fortunate to have volunteers staffing ambulances in Seneca, Prairie City, Long Creek and Monument — in addition to the full-time emergency medical services employees staffing ambulances at the hospital in John Day — who could respond at moment's notice to emergencies in their communities.

For most of last year, however, half of those critical outposts were out of service. Responding to calls in Monument required the crews in John Day to travel almost 60 miles before EMTs could start providing basic life support. Before the patient could be treated in the emergency room, the ambulance had to travel all the way back to John Day.

Undoubtedly, people who could have been saved would have died waiting for help to arrive. With ambulance service restored in the northern cities, people may gain another chance to hug their loved ones.

EMTs from Monument and Long Creek can once again respond immediately and begin transporting patients to the hospital, cutting the travel time in half.

But the benefit of reviving these outlying ambulances goes beyond the immediate effects for northern county residents.

With their return, not only is the county again better covered by emergency medical services, Blue Mountain Hospital District has sent the message it considers volunteer ambulance service important.

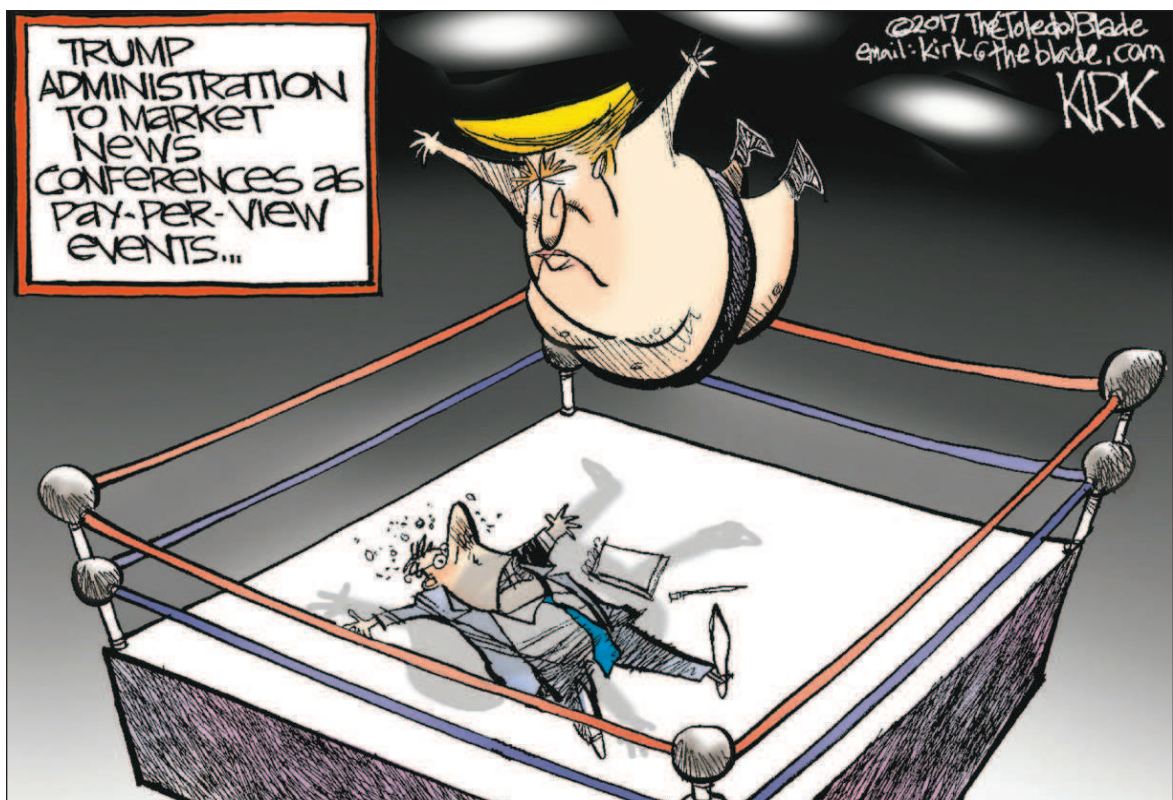
The foundation to continue providing these services remains intact. Volunteer recruitment and retention efforts can be built upon it.

With aging volunteers and a lack of younger replacements, the next threat to these ambulance outposts may be a lack of volunteerism. But the hospital has signaled it has not given up, despite the difficulties.

In a county with stagnant or declining population, infrastructure lost can be difficult to regain.

Both the hospital and all of the ambulance volunteers throughout the county deserve praise for maintaining this service and this system.

For the benefit of all of Grant County, we hope all of these volunteer ambulances live well into the future.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cattle destructive to streams

To the Editor:

A recent editorial in the Blue Mountain Eagle recounted a grazing study that concluded that cattle spend 1-2.5 percent of their time in riparian areas. And the editorial writers asserted this demonstrated that cattle obviously weren't damaging riparian areas as much as assumed.

There are a number of problems with such a conclusion.

First, if you actually read the entire study, the authors admit there were other sources of water like springs and wetlands beyond the stream banks in the area where they did their study. So cattle had other ways to get a drink, which may have compromised the results.

But beyond that issue, what this study really shows is that it doesn't take much time for cattle to destroy riparian areas. In most parts of the West, the major impact to our riparian areas along streams comes from cattle — there are no other major sources of impact.

Cattle trample and break banks, widening the stream and making them more shallow. They compact soils, reducing the sponge effect and water storage of these areas. They eat the streamside vegetation reducing the roots of stream bank plants, and shade of the stream. They pollute the water.

In the end, it doesn't matter if the cows spend 1 percent of their time or all their time in riparian areas. That doesn't change the fact that cattle are among the most destructive element on Western streams. And it doesn't change the fact that ranchers don't compensate the rest of us (owners of public lands) for this destruction.

George Wuerthner
Bend

Congress' public lands decision concerning

To the Editor:

I write with concern about Congress' recent decision to assign zero value to public lands (House Resolution 5). This step allows the new Congress to sidestep requirements that a bill giving away a piece of federal land does not decrease federal revenue or contribute to the federal debt.

This decision directly impacts people who hunt and fish in Eastern Oregon and those who rely on outdoor recreational spending. Public lands generate millions of dollars in revenue for our state and local businesses, in the form of outdoor recreational spending and tax receipts. This decision opens the door to a transfer and sale of thousands of acres in the Wallowa, Umatilla and Malheur National Forests. This results in reduced access and increased costs of management for state and local governments.

In a time when political differences between residents of Eastern and Western Oregon are often laid bare, I hope that all Oregonians can support and protect our public lands for current and future generations benefit and enjoyment.

Scott Leonard
Milwaukie, Oregon

Positive things

To the Editor:

Are things in Grant County really as bad as some would have you think? I asked myself that question and decided to make a list of what has been accomplished by varied groups working hard together. My list from recent years includes the things below:

Bates State Park, a wonderful new John Day Fire Hall (what a great thing for them during this terrible winter), new sidewalks and lighting in John Day, paved pathways, new reader boards and PA system (soon to be installed) at the fairgrounds, tennis courts, a skate park, amazing landscaping and upkeep at our wonderful Seventh Street Complex, a new airport terminal/Forest Service training facility, the world class Thomas Condon center, Kam Wah Chung museum and interpretive center, a micro brewery and several newer small businesses downtown, a soon-to-open new restaurant, improvements and museum at Depot Park in Prairie City, the old church there turning into a community center, the road shop on Lower Yard Road and the reopening of the Long Creek Shop, a full shift at Malheur Lumber, new bike and hiking trails planned, a great community hall in Mt. Vernon, plans moving ahead for a new library in John Day, the hard work of the Blue Mountains Forest Partners with other agencies to ensure an increased continuing timber harvest and jobs through the stewardship plan, unemployment figures that have dropped a percentage point from last year, a wonderful mural in the pretty little Dayville Park, the community gathering place at the intersection in downtown John Day, Little Free Libraries all around the area, the Grantville Theatre and the Canyon City Community Hall.

I know you all could add more. Is there more work to be done? Of course, but these things are real, tangible examples of what can be done.

In the coming days and weeks, Grant County's name will likely be associated with sending a message that ignores the accomplishments of what is on this list, and focuses on the continuation of conflict and working outside of law rather than cooperation. Which message do you want to send?

Judy Schuette
John Day

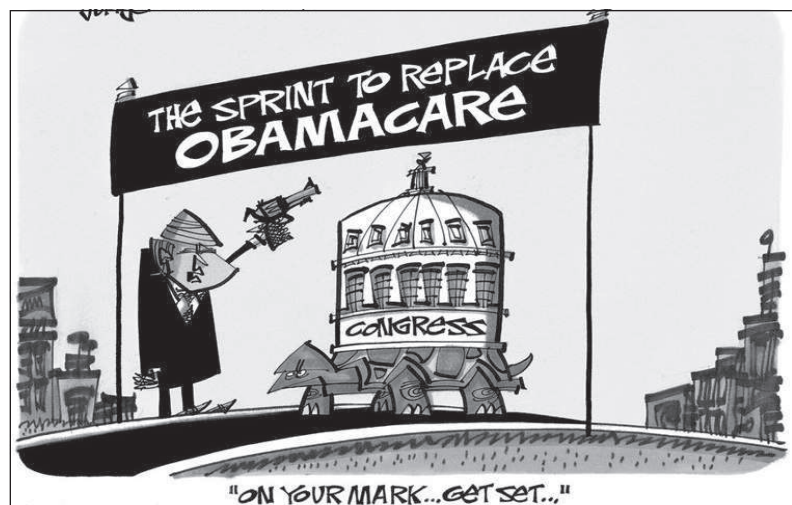
How soon one forgets

To the Editor:

Pause for a moment and rewind the clock back 16 years. George W. Bush had just ascended to the presidency, and his administration and Congress began deregulation of Wall Street and corporate America. Now fast forward about seven and a half years. The housing bubble bursts, and Wall Street and corporate America go into a tailspin, thrusting the American economy into the Great Recession. Finally, fast forward to the present. How soon one forgets.

Fred Fitzgerald
Monument

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WHERE TO WRITE

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- **Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: cityofmonument@centurytel.net.
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- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol,

Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).

- **State Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** (District: 60), Room H-475, State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., Salem OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. Email: rep.cliffbentz@state.or.us. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/bentz/home.htm.
- **State Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R** — (District 30) Room S-223, State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-986-1950. Email: sen.tedferrioli@state.or.us. Email: TFER2@aol.com. Phone: 541-490-6528. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/ferrioli.
- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.

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- **The White House**, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500; Phone-comments: 202-456-1111; Switchboard: 202-456-1414.
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Letters policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to one letter per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters to editor@bmeagle.com, or Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or fax to 541-575-1244.



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