

Rainbow Gathering response highlights double standard

With as much environmental scrutiny as ranchers and loggers face, the response by environmentalists and the Forest Service to the unauthorized Rainbow Gathering on the Malheur National Forest is perplexing.

While the Rainbow group claims to care about the environment and vows to leave the forest better than they found it, Forest Service officials say tens of thousands of people gathered in such a small place causes numerous problems for the ecosystem. Yet the event continues every year.

Where is the outcry from environmentalists over this unauthorized gathering?

The attendees won't sign a special use permit. The short notice provides no time for environmental assessments. And there are many concerns about water and wildlife.

Where are the protests? Where are the lawsuits?

It seems the environmental community has far less concern over problems caused by people with dreadlocks and sandals than hats and boots — despite the fact loggers and ranchers maintain the local economy and the infrastructure needed to maintain forest health.

The Rainbow group argues its gatherings are protected by

the First Amendment right to peaceably assemble. But most groups are required to follow the permitting process to mitigate possible problems.

In response to this group that refuses to follow the process, the Forest Service budgets \$500,000 of taxpayer money each year to mitigate problems caused by this event. Rather than punish the unauthorized users, the federal government picks up the tab.

Where is the logic and fairness in that?

It's a national decision — and funding comes out of the national pot — so local officials should not be blamed. In fact, the resource protection work at the site by local officials is likely preventing some environmental damage.

But there appears to be a double standard for the Forest Service and environmentalists when it comes to what types of ecosystem damage are acceptable — and by what users.

Ranchers and loggers help sustain our community, and do it while navigating the hurdles set up by government regulations. At the very least, the Rainbow Gathering should be held to the same stringent protections. And if the group damages our public lands beyond repair, such gatherings should not be allowed in the future.

THE PROBLEM IS NOT REPUBLICANS OR DEMOCRATS OR CONSERVATIVES OR LIBERALS...SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?



FARMER'S FATE

Pete the parrot

By Brianna Walker
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

Some people are just born funny. My dad's caveat to that is "funny looking, funny smelling, funny sounding." My brother-in-law is funny and often funny in all of these categories. Joe is quite the character: 6 foot 7, skinny as a rail and always full of borderline ill-advised adventures. Such was the case one Saturday afternoon. Joe recalls it this way...



Brianna Walker

My buddies John, James and I were bored, so we headed off to the beach to go biking — the scenery there was always good on a sunny day. John and James took their mountain bikes, and I brought an old beach cruiser I had purchased at a yard sale for a few bucks. If I had to describe the bike today, I would say it was quite hideous, but back then I thought it was the coolest thing around. I added to its flare by installing a parrot, who I named Pete, onto the enormous handlebars. Pete was a squeaky toy I used to warn unsuspecting pedestrians that I was about to pass them. The bike also sported a seat large enough to be confused with a mattress from a child's crib.

We arrived at Newport Beach in board shorts, Hawaiian shirts, straw hats and flip flops. We unloaded the bikes out of the back of my Jeep and started riding down the boardwalk. Pete was having a good time squeaking at pedestrians as I huffed past them on my way to nowhere. We eventually got bored and began looking for something else to do. We decided to ride up to the top of a hill that overlooked the ocean. This turned out to be quite a workout since my bike only had one speed and with the enormous

I was gaining speed at an alarming rate with no apparent way to slow down. I tried putting my feet down to act as brakes, but my flip flops quickly caught fire so I aborted that plan. I had to do something fast because at the bottom of the hill was a stoplight and a T intersection, and I didn't think I could make the turn at my rate of speed.

handlebars was nearly impossible to stand up and peddle. I eventually made it to the top and was rewarded with great views and a snow cone — mostly the snow cone.

We decided to head back down the hill and get some dinner. John and James took off first. Not wanting to be last, I decided it was necessary to pass them — which involved getting on the sidewalk as there wasn't any room between the traffic and parked cars. I quickly shot past them and decided to get back on the street again. My brain said it would be cool to jump off the curb instead of waiting for a driveway entrance to rejoin traffic. This plan worked well — except for one small problem. When I jumped off the curb the chain fell off my bike. On a beach cruiser with a single speed, the chain is necessary as it also runs the coaster brake — an import function when going downhill.

I was gaining speed at an alarming rate with no apparent way to slow down. I tried putting my feet down to act as brakes, but my flip flops quickly caught fire so I aborted that plan. I had to do something fast because at the bottom of the hill was a stoplight and a T intersection, and I didn't think I could make the turn at my rate of speed. I began looking around for something to crash

into. I spotted a perfectly manicured hedge up ahead and thought maybe that would be a good place for the paramedics to pick me up. I'm not sure how fast I was going when I hit the hedge, but it was fast enough to completely uproot two bushes and destroy another.

Once the dust settled, I started assessing the damage. I immediately checked out my Hawaiian shirt to make sure it wasn't torn — it wasn't. I noticed Pete had abandoned me and the hurtling death machine. I found him later in the bushes with no feet. He doesn't squeak the same now. I think he hates me.

I put the uprooted bushes back in place, picked up my chain and the remains of Pete. He'll eventually learn that pain lasts but a moment, but glory forever.

So if you are even feeling a little bored, grab a "funny looking" old beach cruiser, a "funny sounding" squeaky parrot named Pete and a brother-in-law named Joe. Your parrot may unfriend you, but you might make new friends with the paramedics that come to pick you up. And boredom will never be in your vocabulary again — fear, trepidation and pain, perhaps — but never boredom.

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.



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Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).

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• **U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R** — (Second District) 1404 Longworth Building, Washington D.C. 20515. Phone: 202-225-6730. No direct email because of spam. Website: www.walden.house.gov Fax: 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 North Central, Suite 112, Medford, OR 97501. Phone: 541-776-4646. Fax: 541-779-0204.

• **Pending Bills:** For information on bills in Congress, Phone: 202-225-1772.

Eagle's page priorities questionable

To the Editor:

A thought regarding the Blue Mountain Eagle's front page priorities: Consider the Blue Mountain Eagle's article on June 21 buried on Page A8 regarding two key School District No. 3 teachers' retirements. Really?! And the "Rainbow people" get top billing? Together, Peggy Murphy and Marilyn Berry taught our children for 52 years! The Rainbow people are committed to themselves and will likely never be back again. Yet, a picture and article of

Peggy and Marilyn's exemplary service is buried on Page A8? Really?

Al Olson
John Day

Rainbow Gathering comes with a cost

To the Editor:

My heart goes out to the residents of John Day and your upcoming struggles with the Rainbow Family gathering. Several years ago, this group descended on our area of southwest Montana and caused a giant mess. Forget your opinion of the people in the group or their ability to use public land;

just focus on the costs associated with them showing up. After they left us, the state of Montana said the US Forest Service costs were \$573,000. Our county reported a cost in excess of \$230,000 with \$193,000 being imposed on our local hospital. How can a group like this just pick a location and descend upon that area and expect the local residents to foot the bill and take care of them? Articles are available online about the costs associated with this group. Good luck to you. My personal opinion is that they should be stopped before they even get to your area.

Shannon Maness
Dillon, Montana

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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