

Privatizing BPA bad for Northwest

Rick Perry, the former Texas governor with aspirations for the presidency and now head of the Department of Energy, visited Eastern Oregon recently.

Perry stopped at McNary Dam and toured the Bonneville Power Administration transmission facility operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

That tour was off limits to reporters, but Perry was joined by congressmen Greg Walden (R-Oregon) and Dan Newhouse (R-Washington), when they briefly addressed the press outside the dam.

Perry said hydroelectricity will continue to play an important role in America's energy strategy, even though the Trump administration has proposed selling off the BPA to private energy companies.

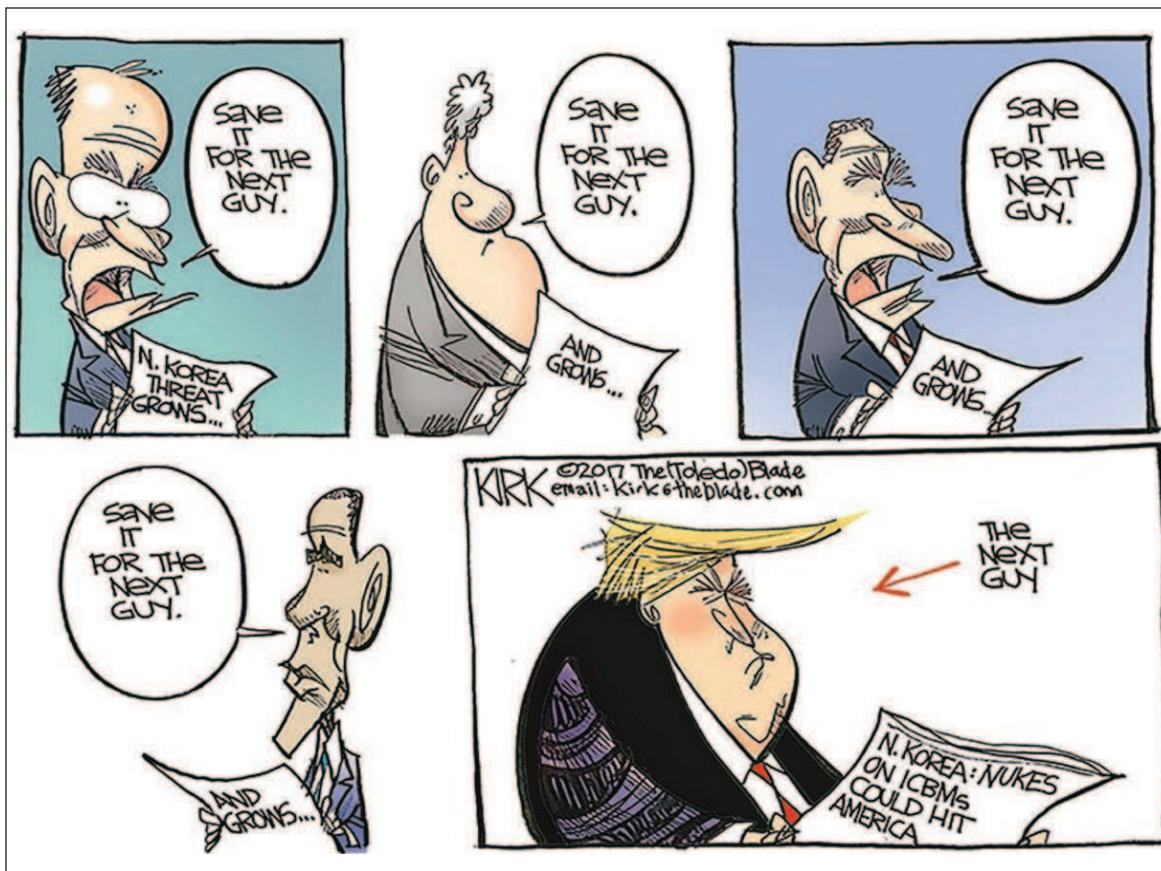
Northwest lawmakers — including Walden and Newhouse — have roundly criticized that plan, saying it will raise rates for consumers and affect reliability in rural areas.

Yet Perry was mum when asked where he stood on the issue, saying only that they should not be afraid to have that conversation.

There's no need to be afraid, and in fact the Northwest has been having that discussion for decades.

We've thought about it and argued about it, and lawmakers of both political parties now agree that privatizing the BPA is a bad idea.

To new minds in Washington, D.C., the short-term windfall of a selloff has them salivating. But those of us who have to live with the result — not just for a political term — know that in the long run, the BPA must remain as is.



GUEST COMMENT

Eclipse visitors underscore need to address deferred maintenance at Fossil Beds

By Jim Hammett
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

We are lucky for all of the benefits the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument brings to our local communities, offering an amazing natural wonder that enriches our local economy. To protect this treasure, particularly after the influx of visitors for the solar eclipse, it is critical that we fix our national parks.

I worked in the National Park System for over 40 years, 19 of which as superintendent of John Day Fossil Beds. Its beauty and geological significance make it truly one of a kind. In 2016, over 200,000 visitors to the park were able to see that for themselves. The number of visitors is expected to skyrocket in 2017 thanks, in no small part, to the solar eclipse.

Estimates are that the Fossil Beds welcomed roughly 50,000 visitors for the eclipse. Keeping the Fossil Beds safe and accessible for the regular volume of visitors is a challenge. The influx of 50,000 visitors over the eclipse weekend challenged the park's facilities and infrastructure to keep up and should serve as a reminder about the importance of ensuring our National Monument and the National Park System as a whole have the resources necessary to keep up the maintenance and repairs that allow hikers, scientists and eclipse watchers alike to enjoy the Fossil Beds.

Years of underfunding from Congress, an increase in visitation and normal infrastructure aging have left John Day Fossil Beds with a backlog of \$1,565,383 of necessary repairs.

We have a responsibility to preserve the Fossil Beds for future generations. We also have a responsibility to today's area residents and businesses who benefit economically from the tourism generated by the Fossil Beds. In 2016, visitors spent an estimated \$10 million in local communities while visiting John Day Fossil Beds National Monument and those dollars supported 153 local jobs. For those local communities and businesses supported by the Monument, it is important to ensure that the John Day Fossil Beds are able to continue offering a quality experience that entices visitors to return to our community. Living here, we know that once those 50,000 visitors learn what a special place this is, they'll want to return.

It is also important to understand the enormity of this issue to the entire National Park System. There is over \$11.3 billion worth of deferred maintenance projects across the National Park System and over \$105

million worth of backlogged projects here in Oregon alone.

To help address the backlog issue, Sens. Warner (D-Virginia) and Portman (R-Ohio) and Representatives Hurd (R-Texas) and Kilmer (D-Washington) introduced bipartisan legislation, H.R. 2584 or the National Park Service Legacy Act. This legislation would provide dedicated federal funds annually to address park maintenance needs. As a result, the National Park Service would be able to preserve our nation's most significant natural and cultural treasures like John Day Fossil Beds.

I hope that Oregon's congressional delegation will show their support for our national parks both here in their home state and throughout the country by cosponsoring the Legacy Act.

The 50,000 eclipse watchers that came to the Fossil Beds are a testament to the popularity of our National Parks System. Protecting our parks means protecting our economy, our recreation opportunities, and our state's natural heritage. We cannot allow this growing backlog to cast a shadow over our national parks. It is time to act.

Jim Hammett was superintendent of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument for 19 years before retiring four years ago.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Confederate Flag a symbol of white supremacy

To the Editor:

Since hearing about the recent violence in Charlottesville and seeing the images of hate and destruction surrounded by the tokens of white supremacy, I can't stop thinking about this year's Prairie City Independence Day parade. In the midst of this family-friendly community event, I was shocked and confused to see a Confederate Flag on the back of the Prairie City Hall float.

The Confederate Flag is a symbol of white supremacy. Full stop. The last few months of emboldened neo-Nazis and white nationalists waving stars and bars, while mosques are bombed, legal immigrants are threatened and deported, allies are stabbed and protesters are mowed down in cars, have underlined this fact. Why was there a Confederate Flag on the Prairie City Hall float?

The history of the Confederate Flag should not be forgotten. We must never forget the long history of slavery and genocide in our country. The legacy of institutionalized racism that continues to haunt and harm us today is part of a larger story, one that will continue to be told in cycles of violence and oppression, if we do not learn from, understand and act with responsibility for our history. But the sym-

bol of racist evil in this country do not belong in places of honor: not at our celebrations, not in our community spaces and not under the auspices of our representatives, at the federal, state, county or city level.

As we mourn Charlottesville, we owe it to those harmed and fallen to be courageous, to meet hate with love, and to examine and confront the forces of extremism in our own communities. What is unacceptable in Charlottesville is unacceptable in Grant County, and the brutality and terror of white supremacy is unacceptable every last place we encounter it.

Morgan Michel
John Day

Bentz's leadership led to successful transportation package

To the Editor:

This letter is to acknowledge, on behalf of Oregon's 242 cities, the leadership and hard work displayed by Rep. Cliff Bentz that resulted in passage of a \$5.3 billion, multimodal transportation package as the 2017 legislative session drew to a close. Despite a number of issues that could have once again derailed a transportation package, Rep. Bentz's focus and caucus leadership were instrumental to a successful outcome.

Also, on behalf of Oregon's

small cities (less than 5,000 in population), I want to acknowledge Rep. Bentz for including a five-fold increase in the Special City Allotment funding as part of HB 2017. This supplemental grant program, now expanded to \$5 million per year, will allow these cities to finally make significant improvements in a street system previously underfunded by the regular per capita-based state highway fund allocation.

Mike McCauley
Executive director
League of Oregon Cities

Analyze and debate events, rather than silencing opponents

To the Editor:

The road to hell is paved with good intentions. Just as some people shout-down "hate-speech" on campus and tear down hate statues in the public park, other people eliminate the websites of hateful groups from the internet.

They forget that the most hated group started out burning books and ended up burning people. They have misplaced priorities and are captives of the moment. Rather than realistically analyze and debate unfolding events, they silence their opponents. Our capacity to learn enables us to imagine the future and to prepare for it.

Michael F. McCarthy
Hayward, California

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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).
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