

Oregon's carbon plan is hot air

Oregon was a national pioneer on land-use planning. It led the way with the Bottle Bill. Its protection of public beach access is legendary.

In each case, Oregonians benefited from the state's landmark legislation. That's not the case with the carbon tax-and-invest proposal being shaped by a committee of Oregon legislators.

The greenhouse gases emitted by Oregon truckers, commuters, utilities, manufacturers and other entities are so small that they are barely measurable on a global scale. Neighboring California has a huge impact, not Oregon.

Oregon officials might win environmental plaudits for taking action, but the actual atmosphere would hardly notice. In fact, there's a distinct chance Oregon could worsen the global situation.

Cap-and-invest is a market-based system in which U.S. states or Canadian provinces place caps on the amount of allowable carbon emissions. To exceed those caps, companies can buy allowances from the government. The allowances can be sold or traded on the open market, with the government investing the income in environmentally friendly projects.

California, Quebec and Ontario are the North American leaders. Key Democratic legislators in Oregon want to join them.

The catch is that Oregon's environmental initiatives already are stronger than those in many states and nations. The world, not just Oregon, loses if companies leave the state for less restrictive locales. Or if Oregon companies switch to buying products manufactured — and shipped — under lighter regulations. Transportation is a huge contributor to greenhouse gases.

California now is the world's fifth-largest economy, larger

than the United Kingdom's. That reality creates the incentive for many California corporations to invest in carbon reduction there. In contrast, Oregon's economy ranks in the middle of the pack among U.S. states — about the size of Egypt's and smaller than Pakistan's, Bangladesh's or Finland's.

The Legislature's Joint Interim Committee on Carbon Reduction must prioritize how cap-and-invest, or any other scheme, would alter the state's economy as well as its environment.

"What we're proposing here is a big and serious program, and I think it's legitimate to expect people to be concerned about the effects on the economy," said Sen. Michael Dembrow, a chief architect of Oregon's cap-and-invest proposal, at a committee meeting this summer.

Such concerns ride especially high in rural Oregon, reflecting both the Democrat-Republican and urban-rural splits on the committee.

"I can't go to cap-and-trade yet," Sen. Fred Girod, R-Stayton, said at the same meeting. "If you listen to the testimony today, it sure seems like we're going to make rural Oregon pay the cost of all this, and I don't see urban Oregon stepping up to the plate, and that really bothers me."

Sen. Alan DeBoer, R-Ashland, has a more modest approach — a carbon-pollution tax, with related projects to improve forest health and reduce the destructive, carbon-emitting wildfires around the state.

"Cap-and-invest is contentious for many reasons, but a broader discussion about sunseting a carbon tax may be a better way to solving one of the most quarrelsome arguments in Salem," he said in a constituent letter last month.

Gov. Kate Brown and other key Democrats are eager for the committee to act.

But there should be no rush. Do what is best for Oregon — all of Oregon.



FARMER'S FATE

I fought the lawn ... and the weeds won

By Brianna Walker
For the Blue Mountain Eagle



with my flower pots full of lovely annuals and perennials my kids and I planted around the house — at least initially. Then they too began to show their true colors — and I don't mean with beautiful blossoms.

"What's the difference between an annual and a perennial?" my son asked.

"Well, an annual dies every year. And a perennial? They die as soon as they leave the greenhouse."

As the summer wore on, the temperatures rose, my flowers drooped — and the weeds thrived.

I've read that plants react to people's voices, and that soothing words make them grow better and healthier. Don't believe it. I pulled weeds. I yelled at the weeds. I called the weeds mean names and hit them on the head. I scolded them in my most gruff voice — and they multiplied as fast as the rabbits eating my garden.

When it comes to weeding, some people have advised the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it was a valuable plant.

While there is definitely truth to that, I think that a better way to tell is to pull them both up — whatever grows back is the weed. But be warned: Give the weeds an inch, and they'll quickly take your yard!

Rock gardens might be a better

choice for my green thumb. Then again, the person who owned our property before us must not have had good luck with them either. I think the rocks must have all died, because he sure buried an awful lot of them!

I recently was talking with one of my dad's high school classmates. She currently lives in Arizona and was back in Oregon for their reunion. She was telling us about the beautiful blue pots that sit on her deck. "It's Arizona — plants get 'dehydrated' so quickly that it's best to buy beautiful pots and plant them with fake flowers!"

Dehydration! That's it! I didn't have "dead" plants in the pots on my deck — they were only dehydrated. All they need is a little IV (imitation vegetation), and they'll look as good as real... er, I mean new!

I imagined my flower pots filled with beautiful fake flowers. I'm afraid, though, that fake plants would probably die too because I'd forget to pretend to water them.

As I look around the lovely patch of kochia, goat heads and rows of dehydrated flowers that we affectionately call home, I decided the only thing I grow well in my garden is tired.

Weeds, dehydration and fake flowers — if only people concentrated on the really important things in life, there'd be a shortage of life jackets and an overstock of shovels, pots and silk flowers.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Reconsider and rewrite the plan'

To the Editor:

This is concerning the draft record of decision and summary of the revised land management plans for the Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests. Portions of these plans should be re-written to more fairly consider access to what are our public lands.

According to the Forest Service manual, page 25, "Management by the people" national forests are made for and owned by the people. They should also be managed by the people. The

officers are paid by the people to act as their agents (agent: one who acts for or in the place of another by authority from him) to see that all the resources of the forest are used in the best interest of everyone concerned. There must be hearty cooperation from everyone; it is the users themselves who can be of chief assistance in doing away with bad methods.

Alternative E-modified (the preferred alternative) of the summary states on page 16, "This alternative differs from the alternative A by moving away from road densities in general forest to focus instead on elk security and on roads resulting in the greatest

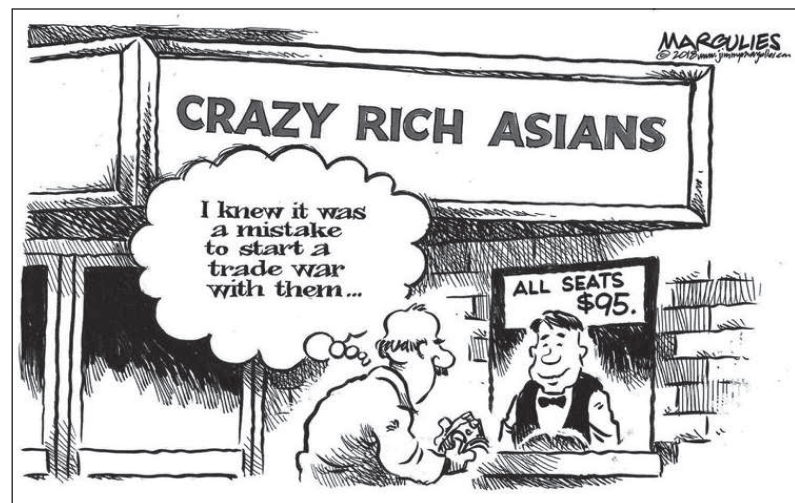
impacts to fish and aquatic ecosystems on the landscape... Hydrologically disconnecting the roadbed from the stream system."

Moving away from road densities and disconnecting of roadbeds translates to road closures and/or access removal.

The Forest Service failed to directly coordinate with the counties on this plan. The agency is required by section 202 (c) (9) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to coordinate with local governments. They need to do this. Reconsider and rewrite the plan.

Mike Christensen
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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