

# Third time a charm for Blue Mountains plan?

Maybe the third try will be successful in cobbling together a roadmap for the management of three sprawling national forests in Eastern Oregon.

The U.S. Forest Service, which oversees the 5.5 million acres of forestland in the Malheur, Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla national forests, has stumbled terribly in its previous attempts to revise its 29-year-old plan. It's supposed to be updated every 15 years, so the agency hasn't even been following its own timeline.

Updating the Blue Mountains plan has turned into an old-fashioned goat rope. In rejecting the latest 5,000-page version, Chris French, the reviewing officer and Forest Service deputy chief, said it was difficult to understand and implement.

That's not good, but the biggest problems appeared to be that Forest Service managers had their own priorities that didn't mesh with those of the people who live, work and recreate in the forests.

One such issue is transportation within the forests. Logging roads and other access are critical to getting around in the forests. Many of the roads, built with public money, have been targeted for closure not only in the Blue Mountains but

other national forests.

Closing the forests to logging, firefighters, hunters, hikers and other users made little sense, the Forest Service was repeatedly told in forum after forum.

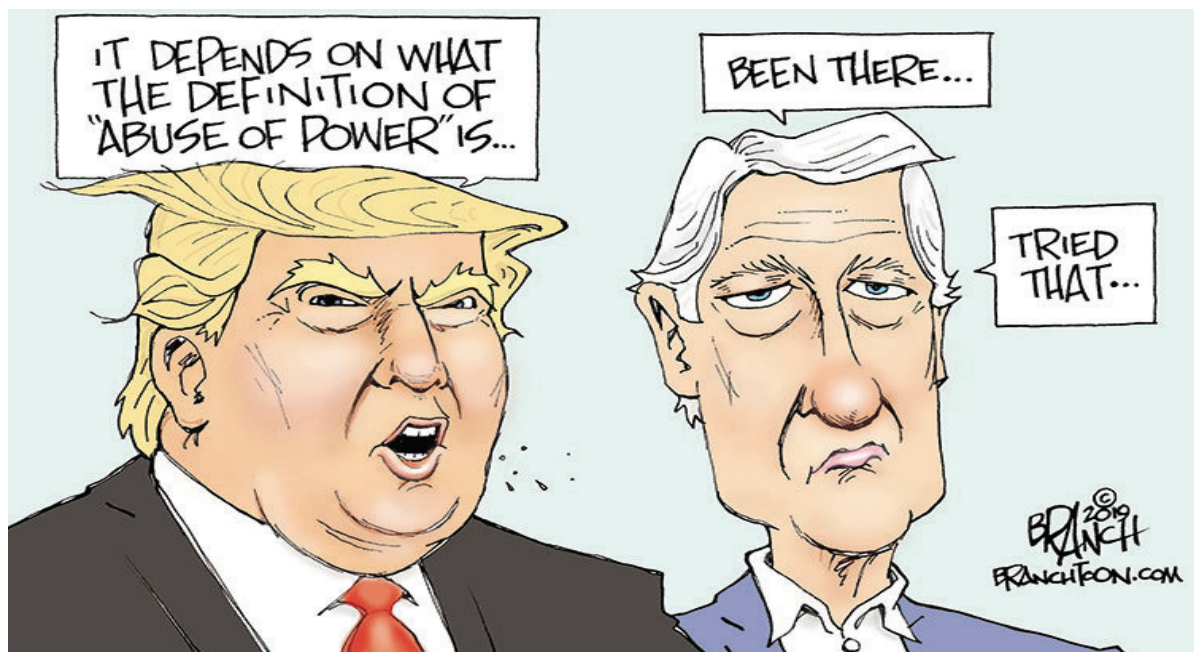
Now, the managers have apparently come to understand that the people who live and work in the Blue Mountains deserve a place at the table as a third iteration of the forest plan is developed. Representatives of the region's counties, tribes and others will join the discussion.

It is our hope that the words "multiple use" will be top of mind as those discussions proceed. The national forests were established under the U.S. Department of Agriculture in part to provide a source of building materials and the jobs associated with them. In addition, other uses were to be allowed.

But most importantly, the forests were to be managed as a resource, not locked up.

Locking up the forests, specifically, is what the new round of negotiations needs to avoid. As a public resource, the national forests of the Blue Mountains need to be open for many types of uses, and accessible to all.

Otherwise, they will fail to fulfill their purpose and stifle the economy of Eastern Oregon and southeastern Washington state.



## GUEST COMMENT

# The year of the community

By Quint Studer

Let's make 2020 the year of the community.

If you looked only at the big picture, you'd have to say we live in deeply troubled times. It seems we've never been more polarized. Political discourse feels more like a war zone than a thoughtful national conversation. But what happens when you zoom in closer?

That's the question I ask myself as I reflect on the past year spent exploring dozens of small and mid-sized communities across America. I've talked with hundreds, maybe thousands, of mayors, chamber of commerce members, new entrepreneurs, business owners and citizens of all ages. I've sat down to great meals in downtown restaurants, listened to fabulous bands and attended some of the world's coolest festivals. And what I've found is that the America one sees "up close and personal" bears little resemblance to the America one sees on the national news.

I'm not saying we don't have real problems. We do. But we have more bright spots than dark — more courtesy than incivility — and often that good news flies under the radar. I've always been a believer in shining a light on the positive until it overcomes the negative. Gratitude is more powerful than griping. And what I'm grateful for today, at the turn of the year, is America's communities.

Real life doesn't happen nationally. It happens locally. And at the community level, I see people partnering with their neighbors to solve problems, working hard and play-

ing hard, listening and compromising and — quite often — making sacrifices for the good of others. Locally is where we're at our very best. It's where we can use our influence and our gifts to make our communities strong and to make life better for everyone. I view communities through a lens of revitalization because that's the work I do. As things have gotten more dysfunctional at the national level, the by-product is that people on the local level have kicked in. And what I see is that citizens aren't counting on government to "save" them. They're doing the hard work of revitalization themselves. They're owning it. They're investing in their cities and towns. And they're starting new conversations: How can we make our community the best it can be? How can we reinvent ourselves, start and grow local businesses and transform into a great place to work, live and play?

This mindset has kicked in everywhere: big cities, small towns, communities of every shape and size. And no wonder. The chaos and uncertainty of the past few decades have made us crave personal connections with our friends and family. We want our children and grandchildren nearby (with good jobs to keep them there). We want lively downtowns with great restaurants, funky stores, cool living spaces and plenty of fun things to do. And we're making it happen.

In Thomas L. Friedman's book "Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations," he talks about how rapid accelerations in technology, globalization and Mother Nature are disrupting our lives and leaving

people feeling destabilized. He says these forces are like a hurricane, one in which the winds of change are swirling so fast that families can't find a way to anchor themselves.

Friedman makes the case that the only answer is building healthy communities, ones that are flexible enough to navigate this hurricane and provide stability for the citizens within them. He quotes the words from a ballad by Brandi Carlile, "You can dance in a hurricane, but only if you're standing in the eye." Our communities are that eye. They provide a firm place to stand and find stability while all this change is swirling around us.

My hope is that 2020 will be the year of the community. We can make it so. We can hold our families close. We can reach out to neighbors to connect with them, to help them, to engage them in the work of making things better. We can shop local. We can partner with government the right way. We can smooth the way for entrepreneurs. We can galvanize our small business communities to drive positive change. And we can act as ambassadors for our communities so that others want to invest, live, work and play here too.

Won't you join me? Celebrating all the good in our communities, and working together to make them stronger, will make for a 2020 that's even better than all the years that have come before.

Quint Studer is author of "Building a Vibrant Community: How Citizen-Powered Change Is Reshaping America." For more information, visit [thebusyleadershandbook.com](http://thebusyleadershandbook.com), [vibrantcommunityblueprint.com](http://vibrantcommunityblueprint.com) and [studer.org](http://studer.org).



## GUEST COMMENT

# A decade of perseverance

2019 is an exuberant end to the decade. There has never been a better time to start or grow a small business than the current booming economy.

The unemployment rate is at a 50-year low with 110 months of consecutive positive job growth. Wages have increased 3.1% during the past 12 months. And 30.7 million small businesses are creating two out of every three net new jobs.

However, the 2010s had a humble beginning. Still reeling from the Great Recession, many small businesses were still struggling and in survival mode. Job growth was flat, the unemployment rate was a staggering 9.6% and there were only 26.8 million small businesses in the U.S.

Not only was hiring stagnant, but lending and spending were tight too. Survival was the goal as small business owners felt the weight of keeping their doors open, keeping their staff employed and finding their way in post-recession economy. It was a difficult and stressful time to be a small business owner.

However, true to the entrepreneurial spirit and American dream, small businesses persevered.

During the past couple years in my role as regional administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration, I've traveled around Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington to meet small businesses and listen to their journeys. I've met businesses that reshaped what they do in order to move forward. I've met businesses who innovated with new cost-saving



Jeremy Field

strategies for their customers. I've even met entrepreneurs who started their business during a time most would say they were crazy.

The common thread is they all adapted, they all took risks and they all had a vision they focused on seeing through.

One local story that comes to mind when I think of the perseverance of small businesses during the 2010s is the Astoria Crest Motel in Astoria. The property overlooks the mouth of the Columbia River, where in 1805, Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery took in the very same majestic view as they journeyed to their future winter camp in nearby Fort Clatsop. Originally known as the Crest Motel when it first opened its doors in 1952, the property had gradually fallen into a state of disrepair and was at risk of being shuttered in 2014.

However, Air Force veteran and entrepreneur Marshall Doyle and his wife, Patricia, along with business partner Don West and his wife, Wendy, saw this as an opportunity to save a local treasure and strengthen the community.

Thanks to SBA financing, the expertise of the four owners and a generous amount of "sweat equity," the Astoria Crest Motel is enjoying a resurgence as more and more travelers are discovering the hidden treasures of the Oregon Coast.

Today, the motel serves as a dedicated Lewis and Clark interpretive viewpoint and regularly enjoys full occupancy in the summer as well as becoming a popular meeting space for local clubs and organizations in the community. The business has grown its workforce from two employees to 15 and tripled its annual revenues since its rebranding.

I'm proud that SBA programs were able to support businesses like the Astoria Crest Motel through tough times. But I'm even more impressed with the grit and innovation of entrepreneurs like the Doyles and Wests.

When small businesses share their journeys with me, I am inspired and I am grateful. Our economy and our communities wouldn't be what they are today without the perseverance of entrepreneurs.

As we close the decade, let's take a moment to pause and celebrate the rise from recession to historic economic growth. And let's take a moment to thank the small business owners who brought our country to this high point through their innovation, determination and perseverance.

Jeremy Field is the regional administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration Pacific Northwest Region, which serves Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska. The SBA empowers entrepreneurs and small businesses with resources to start, grow, expand or recover.

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