

Critical to earn readers' trust

A recent study produced by the Knight Foundation and Gallup probably didn't grab the attention of a lot of county residents, but it sure caught our gaze.

The study "State of Public Trust in Local News" carried some good news and some bad news for the print media in America.

One conclusion the study delivered was that Americans tend to trust their local reporters more than the national news.

For many of us in the conservative heartland of Eastern Oregon, that probably isn't much of a surprise. But other results of the study were less heartening for reporters and editors striving to work in rural areas like Grant County.

One key result from the study: About 45% of Americans have either a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of trust in local news compared with 31% for national news. At first glance that stat may seem cause for celebration, especially in the newspaper industry.

But it isn't.

That's because the statistic means more than half of Americans don't trust their local press. Even fewer, obviously, trust our national counterparts.

Much of that could be put squarely on the shoulders of the current political climate we now inhabit, like it or not, in the United States. Facts tend to be whatever informa-

tion fits a political outlook. If the "facts" don't fit that political view, then they are bogus.

As depressing as that is, we in the local and regional news industry must do more to earn trust from our readers.

It is simply not just a good idea but, in some ways, it is a crucial act of self-preservation. The good news from the study is that 79% of Americans find their local news organizations covering issues that impact their daily lives.

That is heartening.

The overarching issue, though, boils down to creating and building trust to ensure democracy thrives. Residents — voters — can't make informed decisions about important matters if they don't have the information. We at the *Blue Mountain Eagle* are the crucial link between voters and their elected leaders regarding information flow. Without the information, members of a democracy are no more than a mob.

Our job, then, is to work hard to be as value-free as possible regarding the presentation of news. Because we are human, that is a tall order. Humans makes mistakes. Humans are fallible.

But readers need to know that we will do all we can, always, to deliver balanced information in our stories. We believe it to be critical that we earn our readers' trust. And we do that by presenting information in a fair and professional manner.

Water questions in search of answers

In the West, few resources evoke more passion than water. The reason is obvious: Everything comes down to the quantity and quality of water.

That's well illustrated across Oregon. In the Klamath Falls region, the periodic shortage of water is well-known, as are the many demands placed on it.

Analogous stories can be found in many areas east of the Cascades, as agriculture, urban growth, residential and industrial uses, fish and other environmental concerns collide.

Even on the west side of Oregon, where ample precipitation is the rule, its seasonality and limited storage put stress on cities and farms. Protected fish and other species also have a major impact on the quantity of water available at any given time.

Because of the critical importance water holds for every aspect of life, it's surprising that Oregon is just now developing a plan for managing it in the years to come. More clearly, the state does have a strategy, but has done little to put it into effect.

That could change in the near future, as state water managers, in conjunction with their regional counterparts, put together a plan to better manage surface and ground water.

During the course of developing this "Water Vision" managers have asked for comments, and we have some. We also have questions. For example:

- Why are people in regions such as Klamath Falls left fighting for their livelihoods, often as the result of state actions, or inactions?
- Why don't cities such as Salem

and Portland get their water from the Willamette River, which runs through them? Instead, Salem gets much of its water from the North Santiam River 20 miles away, and Portland gets some water from the Willamette but most of it from anywhere else. Wouldn't it make more sense for those and other cities on the river to clean it up instead of taking water from other sources?

- The video introducing the the "Water Vision" refers to providing clean, affordable water to Oregonians. Why is it that some residents of small towns are paying nearly \$100 a month for water and sewer service, while other cities, whose overloaded sewage systems sometimes empty directly into the Willamette, pay much less?

- The video also says the state's water infrastructure has been pretty much ignored for the past 50 years. Why is that? Is it a case of misplaced priorities? Storage, including dams and aquifer recharge, continues to be the ongoing need in Oregon, yet little has been done at the state level to maintain or develop it.

- The Columbia River — one of North America's great waterways — flows along much of the northern border of Oregon, yet it is barely mentioned as a source of water. Why is that? Wouldn't it make sense to tap the Columbia as a source of water for municipal use and irrigation, as Washington state has?

These and other questions represent the "elephant in the living room" as water managers look to the future, but they can also represent solutions.

Our hope is that all sources of water will be "on the table" as Oregon's leaders plan for the future.

— *The Capital Press*



SHOOTING THE BREEZE

Animals on the run

My all time favorite story about shooting at running game took place before I was born. My dad had a pronghorn tag and was itching to go.

In those days his only hunting rifle was a Savage 99 in .300 Savage. On the wide open ground he was attempting a stalk on a small bunch of ten with two billies and eight nannies.

Being as the eyesight of your average pronghorn is some six times better than the average human, the engaging hunter was busted and in a single file at forty something miles an hour the bunch took off.

Dad, ever confident in his old Savage took aim at the bigger buck running out in front and quickly calculating a lead, squeezed off a shot.

As the lumbering 150 grain bullet made its way across the distance, nine of the 10 antelope ran past, unscathed. The 10th, luckily also a billy, was not so lucky and took the bullet squarely in the heart. Though he was aiming at the first, his bullet hit the last.

For years I struggled to hit running game. But after reading some classic literature and receiving some sage advice I began connecting. There are really three



Dale Valade unsportsmanlike to do so as the chances of merely wounding rather than a quick clean kill go up considerably. There are shots we just shouldn't attempt, especially on moving game. That being said, it's up to each of us to decide it's morality. This should be based solely upon the individual opportunities that present themselves and our own abilities as shooters.

The second school of thought is called the follow through. These folks are primarily shooting birds with shotguns.

Aerial targets are a much different three dimensional dynamic versus a four-legged animal running on the ground. The follow through is very self explanatory, while drawing a bead you follow the expected trajectory of your target with your swinging barrel, but aim where you want to hit and keep following through even after the trigger is pulled and the shot has left the barrel.

The third school of thought is the lead (lead not lead). Lead-

ing your moving game animal by a prescribed distance and firing your bullet in front of them so that they both intersect at the exact right moment can be trickier than it sounds. But with practice, you'll pick it up.

In general the smaller it is and faster the animal moves, the more difficult it will be to hit. And how the animal moves also comes into play. Rabbits hop, deer bound, elk prance, and bears amble.

Some animals are shifty while others run in straight lines. The angle of their escape and whether the shot presented is at the vitals or not must also be evaluated. Don't mistake me for espousing some Elmer Fudd-esque notion of flinging lead at every come what may shot opportunity. That is foolhardy at best.

The bottom line is, through a lot of practice you'll develop aspects of all three of the preceding schools of thought. You'll learn to follow through, to lead and very importantly when to not shoot.

Any tips to share for shooting at running game? Write us at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com!

Dale Valade is a local country gent with a deep love for hand-loading, hunting and shooting.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Frivolous spending on courthouse roof

On Nov. 6, I returned from elk camp to attend an "emergency" meeting about the roof of the Grant County Courthouse. As the meeting began, we were informed that the Court was declaring a state of emergency for the roof, and they were going to hire a contractor based out of Pendleton to do the work for \$180,000. Because it is a "state of emergency," Judge Scott Myers said they were not required to get multiple bids for the work.

The courthouse does not have a very large roof. I gave my background in commercial roofing and suggested the bid was very high, that other bids should be taken and the court could save up to 30%. Judge Scott Myers said "it is not about the money." I asked relevant questions about the roofing company's offer regarding materials and process.

Judge Myers said they have had leaking roof issues since the elevator was put in years ago. He also said that he had personally thought the roof was going to cost \$150,000 prior to consulting any roofing professional, suggesting he is a "licensed roofing contractor." I felt he was suggesting that my experience and knowledge was insignificant.

I was soon asked if I could start the roof on Nov. 11, if I were to

submit a bid. I felt like they knew the answer to that already, and of course I said no because of prior obligations.

I encouraged the court to get at least one other bid from a company in Baker that had offered to come give a bid, according to Judge Myers. They made a motion to give the other roofer an opportunity to bid and hold another court meeting on Friday to decide on awarding the bid. They voted yes, unanimously. I was relieved that they were going to at least get another bid. I left the meeting. I was later informed that after I had left, they changed their mind on the other bid and simply decided to hire the contractor out of Pendleton.

I have lost sleep over this, because I know very well the cost of materials, dump fees and labor for such a project. If any one person was managing their own money, I feel they would responsibly look for ways to use it wisely.

I am uncomfortable with knowing our County Court uses their funds so frivolously. I am very disappointed in the management of our County Court and the way I was spoken to by a non-bias elected official. I am looking for more responsible representatives to step forward next election that we can put our trust in to take care of such issues in a timely manner with the County's spending being managed wisely.

Darrell McKrola
Mt. Vernon

Appreciation of Veterans Day support

This past Veterans Day saw many acts of kindness and appreciation to our veterans. Too many to list all, but free meals from restaurants, meals and recognition from students at schools, handmade Quilts of Valor given to vets, handiwork on homes and firewood delivered.

Again, so many acts of help and recognition to our veterans show the great appreciation from our Grant County citizens for their freedom and security. May God continue to bless America.

Dave Traylor
John Day

Two sides to 'Dissent' story

Since when did the front page of our newspaper become a forum for personal rants? Refer to the incredibly biased "The High Cost of Dissent in Grant County."

I certainly hope the other side of that discussion receives equal space.

Rozanne Mullin
John Day



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