

Staying vigilant out in the forests

Fires have ravaged the western part of our great state, displacing thousands, while smoke continues to linger in our county and elsewhere in Oregon.

Without a doubt it has become a heart-wrenching experience for the rest of the state to view the destruction wrought across Western and Southern Oregon, but the tragedy unfolding there should be a stark reminder to the rest of us that the same type of modern disaster could occur here.

That's because the fire danger across Eastern Oregon remains high. Though our region has, blissfully, avoided major wildfires this year — so far — now is not the time to let down our guard.

The images emerging from the fires in Western, Southern and Central Oregon underscore how fast a wildfire can ignite and how quickly those blazes can move.

A million acres are scorched in our state and there are already plenty of pundits lining up to label the blame and seek a name to our collective pain.

Climate change.
Forest mismanagement.
Misplaced government priorities.

Reasons abound. The truth is probably more in the middle — as it often is. Climate change, forest mismanagement

and skewed priorities all play a role, but no single factor is the cause of the tragedy.

Truth is hard to come by now, but one factor that can't be overlooked is the continued mismanagement of our forests that has created tinderboxes ready to explode with the slightest spark. Instead of developing a broad-based, multi-use blueprint to manage our forests, our nation's judicial system is often where key decisions are made regarding forests.

Forest management plans developed are quickly tied up by lawsuits. And anything even remotely connected to logging is almost a guarantee of a court battle.

That's not how we should manage our forests, but, unfortunately, that is the new normal. All of which means it is even more important for all of us to take precautions while we are in the forest or out on our desert steppes. A momentary lapse in safety could mean the creation of a giant maelstrom that consumes thousands of acres.

Voters apparently do not have a say in how to manage our forests, nor carry a voice in a courtroom where the latest lawsuit in forest management is played out, but we all can make sure that when we do recreate we ensure that we remain vigilant and careful.



GUEST COMMENT

Pivot plan critical for Oregon small business survival

When people describe entrepreneurs and small business owners as resilient, there has never been a time when that has been truer than this year.

As small businesses in Oregon deal with unforgiving wildfires on top of the impact felt by the coronavirus pandemic, businesses need to rethink and retool how they do business in order to survive. A pivot plan is critical.

Being a small business owner can often feel lonely, with the world, clients and employees weighing on their shoulders. The U.S. Small Business Administration and the Oregon Small Business Development Center want one message to ring clear for businesses figuring out a pivot plan: You are not alone.

The SBDC network is the largest resource partner funded by the SBA and provides one-on-one business advising at no cost to entrepreneurs. Whether it's creating a resiliency plan, navigating options for financing, reworking a marketing plan or establishing new operations systems, SBDC-certified advisers walk business owners through their options so they can confidently make tough decisions about their business.

Right now, there are three things every small business must do to successfully pivot and move their business forward:

- Don't panic. The resources for small business are some of the greatest in history and you are not in this alone.
- Look for opportunities. Business pivots and changes in consumer behavior provide opportunities toward innova-



Jeremy Field



Mark Gregory

tion, new market strategies and operational efficiency.

• Negotiate well. We are all in this together and whether negotiation involves lease agreements, established contracts or future business, strategic negotiation is a cornerstone of successful businesses.

SBDC advisers are actively helping Oregon businesses recover from wildfires and the pandemic with these three things already. In fact, more than 5,200 small businesses have received technical assistance from the Oregon SBDC since March.

Plus, Oregon small businesses have been approved for more than \$9.2 billion in Paycheck Protection Program loans, SBA COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loans and EIDL Advances, thanks in part to SBDC advisers.

Thanks to the CARES Act, the SBA provided the Oregon SBDC with additional funding to expand the Oregon SBDC Capital Access Team. Composed of business advisers with financial backgrounds and retired bankers, these experts participated in numerous webinars with clients, partners, banks and public agencies.

CARES Act resources have also allowed SBDC centers across the state to expand advising support to nearly twice as many clients served compared to the previous six-month period.

Working together with local partners, SBA staff and SBDC advisers have educated small businesses about the financing programs and helped guide business owners through the process. And both of our organizations continue to guide businesses through the PPP forgiveness process and other coronavirus business support, along with disaster preparedness and recovery resources related to this summer's wildfires.

Looking forward, new statewide advising services focused on restaurateurs are underway. This is utilizing restaurant advisers from the Oregon SBDC along with new advisers through an agreement with the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association. Survey assessments of both restaurants and travel industry businesses continue through collaboration with Business Oregon, the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association and Travel Oregon.

This is not the first obstacle small businesses have had to face. It will certainly not be the last either. One thing is for certain, though: For decades, the SBA and Oregon SBDC have been there to empower small businesses to weather the storm, and we'll continue to do so through every stage of a business' life cycle.

Jeremy Field is the regional administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration Pacific Northwest Region, which serves Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska.

Mark Gregory is the state director of the Oregon Small Business Development Center, an SBA-funded resource partner.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why not call local firefighters?

failed to call out firefighters in John Day and two units were ready to go. Why?

To the Editor:
Is this true? Rumors are flying that Gov. Kate Brown

Annetta Huffman
John Day

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.



WHERE TO WRITE

GRANT COUNTY

- **Grant County Courthouse** — 201 S. Humbolt St., Suite 280, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0059. Fax: 541-575-2248.
- **Canyon City** — P.O. Box 276, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0509. Fax: 541-575-0515. Email: tocc1862@centurylink.net.
- **Dayville** — P.O. Box 321, Dayville 97825. Phone: 541-987-2188. Fax: 541-987-2187. Email: dville@ortelco.net
- **John Day** — 450 E. Main St, John Day, 97845. Phone: 541-575-0028. Fax: 541-575-1721. Email: cityjd@centurytel.net.
- **Long Creek** — P.O. Box 489, Long Creek 97856. Phone: 541-421-3601. Fax: 541-421-3075. Email: info@cityoflongcreek.com.
- **Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: cityofmonument@centurytel.net.
- **Mt. Vernon** — P.O. Box 647, Mt. Vernon 97865. Phone: 541-932-4688. Fax: 541-932-4222. Email: cmtv@ortelco.net.
- **Prairie City** — P.O. Box 370, Prairie City 97869. Phone: 541-820-3605. Fax: 820-3566. Email: pchall@ortelco.net.
- **Seneca** — P.O. Box 208, Seneca

97873. Phone and fax: 541-542-2161. Email: senecaoregon@gmail.com.

SALEM

- **Gov. Kate Brown, D** — 254 State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-378-3111. Fax: 503-378-6827. Website: governor.state.or.us/governor.html.
- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.
- **Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** — 900 Court St. NE, S-301, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1730. Website: oregonlegislature.gov/Bentz. Email: Sen.CliffBentz@oregonlegislature.gov.
- **Rep. Lynn Findley, R-Vale** — 900 Court St. NE, H-475, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. Website: oregonlegislature.gov/findley. Email: Rep.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

- **The White House**, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500; Phone-comments: 202-456-1111; Switchboard: 202-456-1414.



Grant County's Weekly Newspaper

- Editor & General Manager**Sean Hart, editor@bmeagle.com
- Reporter**Rudy Diaz, rudy@bmeagle.com
- Reporter**Steven Mitchell, steven@bmeagle.com
- Sports**sports@bmeagle.com
- Marketing Rep**Kim Kell, ads@bmeagle.com
- Office Assistant**Alexandra Hand, office@bmeagle.com

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