

Stop denying the impact of fuel in big fires

There are no adjectives that adequately describe the devastation that wildfires have brought to the West in the last month. At least 33 people are known to have died in the fires, and the damage to lives, livelihoods and property cannot be calculated.

Western governors — Kate Brown, Jay Inslee and Gavin Newsom — were quick to place the blame on climate change. Citing climate change tells not even half the story.

Dry conditions certainly are a contributing factor in the spread of the fires. But so is the decades-long increase in the understory fuel load that feeds these massive fires. And this fuel load has been allowed to build because of a combination of public policy and environmental lawsuits that have severely reduced logging on public lands and efforts, such as prescribed burns and selective thinning to treat the problem.

Fire is a natural part of forest ecology. Low-intensity fires periodically cleared out the grasses, brush and small trees that flourish in the understory. The government aggressively fights wildfires on public lands, which is completely warranted when those fires threaten people and private property.

Without fire, the forests have become more densely packed with vegetation.

Thinning and prescribed burning of dense stands within national forests is the federal government’s main preventive

approach to the problem, but even the largest of these projects that span 10,000 acres or more are modest compared with the 160 million acres the U.S. Forest Service manages in the West.

And in many cases it takes years to get these projects through regulatory and court challenges that attend any actions on public lands.

So, when the forest catches fire in the dense understory and spreads, causing the fire to burst into the canopy, and then add the 60 mph winds that drove the fires in the Northwest 10 days ago, you have a conflagration of epic proportions.

Yes, dry conditions have played a part in this drama.

Putting the entire blame on climate change is convenient for progressive politicians who have a policy agenda. But implementing all of the climate legislation dreamed up by environmentalists would not impact the existing climate for decades, if at all.

Remember, though, that fire has been a part of the forest for millennia. Even if the climate could be returned to some ideal “norm,” today’s forests would still burn, and burn intensely.

We know how to prevent big fires today, and that’s by removing the fuel — whether by letting more fires burn, cutting more timber, prescribed burns, selective thinning or a combination thereof.

Fuel deniers need to stop using fire to push another agenda.



SHOOTING THE BREEZE Preseason prep

Fall is on the way, thankfully. Although our flip-flop wearing better halves lament the nearing end of the final act of summer, most men I know heartily welcome the cooler weather. With archery season well under way, rifle season will be close behind. Time to get all of our ducks in a row. No pun intended.

Besides sharpening our cutlery, breaking out the camping supplies, heavier clothes and chainsaw, we need to give the old smoke-pole a more than casual once over. I know, I know, you sighted your rifle in when you bought it new in 1970, and it has shot true ever since. The fact is guns, mounts/rings and optics are mechanical devices with all kinds of small parts. Even the very best made can and will fail. As fate would have it, these failures happen at the worst possible times. While it’s not always possible to mitigate these inopportune breakdowns, you can catch them before the moment of truth by a preseason inspection.

Not just an eyeball, but a trip to the range is good practice for every shooter. After ensuring the mechanics of our hunting rigs are in good order, we should shoot a few rounds from a bench rest to double check that we are still zeroed. At



Dale Valade



Contributed photo

Sighting in can be a fun group activity in preparation for hunting season.

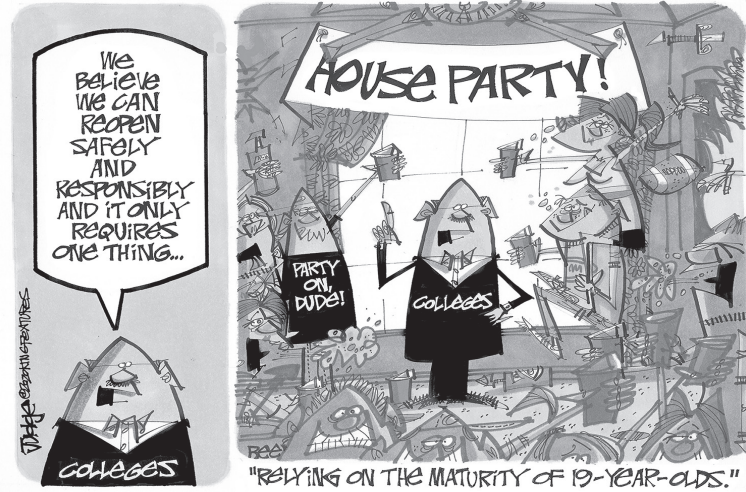
the risk of sounding condescending, I merely say that this should consist of a bit more effort than flinging a magazine full of rounds offhand at a paper plate or a beer box 25 yards away and calling it good. Zero check should always be done in a way that as much human error can be eliminated as is possible, like from a bench rest. In general, depending on ammo, your rifle should be able to keep three to five shots in a cluster measuring between one to one and one half inches wide at 100 yards. Once zero has been verified, by all means get off the bench and practice from the four field positions and from your bipod of shooting sticks if you are thusly outfitted. Practice and practice, you can never have enough practice!

Ideally this verification of zero and supplemental practice should

take place with ample time to repair or replace anything gone amok. Especially now during an election year shortage, extra ammo, optics, scope mounts and scope rings can be tough to come by. Those with multiple guns would do well to have a backup gun sighted in and available in the event of a breakdown where parts cannot be quickly acquired. If you don’t have a formal range to attend for your sight in, Bear Creek Shooting Range, located between John Day and Prairie City, hosts two free public sight-in days each fall. Be as well prepared as possible when you go after your meat this fall. You’ll be glad you did.

What are you doing for preseason practice? Write to us at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com!

Dale Valade is a local country gent with a love for the outdoors, handloading, hunting and shooting.



WHERE TO WRITE

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 - **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.
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The reason

To the Editor:

I’ve read several comments about the decision made by the mayor and city council members of Canyon City concerning the proposed new aquatic center. Statements such as “This is no longer about the pool. This is now about our constitutional right to vote” and we “obstructed the opportunity for the voters to voice their opinion” also “it’s up to the citizens not the Council and Mayor.” To be very clear, I am pleased with the majority “no” vote that the city council of Canyon City gave regarding the proposed new taxing and bond district. It would have been remiss of the council to approve a resolution for a new taxing district and new bond district that would have an unknown tax liability and an unknown bond payment for the folks of Canyon City. The moment the town of Mt. Vernon and Mt. Vernon Rural Fire District opted out of the proposed district, it made void the proposed district and payment distribution. Since the mayor and city council are the legislative branch of government for Canyon City, it is our duty to insure that when a measure is brought to us it must be intact as proposed, in this case the district no longer existed as proposed, thereby leaving the district invalid. Without a valid district/measure to go on the election ballot, there is absolutely nothing to vote on. It’s that simple. We did not take anyone’s “right to vote” away or “obstructed” any voter in any way. If a measure makes the ballot, vote on it. Canyon City cannot afford to have the mayor and city council vote for issues based on good intentions without a clear cost to our citizens. As for Gleason

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

swimming pool, we in Canyon City do already pay a tax that was established in 1989 to help John Day keep the swimming pool running, and it is called John Day-Canyon City Parks and Rec. The contract with JD-CC Parks and Rec for operating the swimming pool expired Aug. 8, 2020, which, if the pool does not open again, Canyon City may want to revise/evaluate its participation in the taxing district and the future distribution of those funds.

Steve Fischer
Canyon City

‘Irresponsible and unnecessary’ title

To the Editor:

I found it highly irresponsible and unnecessary that the Blue Mountain Eagle found the need to highlight the front page of last week’s issue with the titillating title “Sex Talk,” referencing the issues within the sheriff’s office and our local officials. We have very inquisitive young grandchildren that come into our home, and this past week while they were visiting, I glanced over to see the paper face up with this title and quietly walked over to remove it from view. Why should I have to explain, should they innocently ask, what exactly this means? Speaking as a grandparent, I feel you put not only me in a difficult situation, but other families with young children as well. Perhaps the decision to name the title of this article came from the desire to increase readership, but I am profoundly disappointed in our local newspaper.

Suzy Burton
John Day

‘Consider the future when you vote’

To the Editor:

The coming presidential election comes down to a simple formula: What kind of world do you want to leave for your children and or grandkids?

We have the stark choice between two senile old men, one of whom is, by all accounts, a basically decent human being and the other senile old man who is a liar, is financially irresponsible (count the bankruptcies) and revels in hate mongering. I heard someone say how good it is to hear someone speak his mind, never mind the consequences.

Well, excuse me, you and I have that right, but a president does not.

Sorry, but our president has to represent all the citizens, not just the chosen few. A bubble head on entertainment TV has the right to babble nonsense, but elected folks lose that right.

What they say, nonsense or not, has people listening, and if they hear lawlessness encouraged, intolerance encouraged and distrust of considered opinion encouraged then those evils are acted upon by some listeners. I do not want our legacy for the generations to come to be irresponsibility.

Fiscal responsibility? Excuse me again, but the last administration to achieve a balanced budget was Bill Clinton!

We are doing all we can to make earth a hostile environment. Please consider the future when you vote.

John Wolter
John Day



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