

# Forest management must be top priority

Come with us on a virtual road trip. We'll start in the Cascade Range near the Willamette Valley of Oregon and head south on Interstate 5. We'll stop in towns with names like Detroit, Gates, Blue River, Vida, Phoenix and Talent.

Or at least they used to be towns. They — and the people who lived there — were victims of the ferocious wildfires that blew through parts of Washington and Oregon on Labor Day.

In Oregon, Washington and California, wildfires destroyed 14,689 homes this year, and 6.3 million acres of forests were burned.

Surveying the damage, we shake our head and ask a simple question: Why couldn't forest managers do a better job?

That's a simple question, but it has complex answers.

It's not just a matter of cutting trees to create fire breaks. In the 21st century, forest managers are hogtied by politics, poorly written laws and environmental groups that use those laws to stop thinning and other types of projects.

Left out of the mix are taxpayers. They — we — are the victims of a triple whammy.

First, we get to run for our lives when our homes are threatened or destroyed by fires.

Then we get to pay for fire-fighters. This year fire suppression costs topped \$3.2 billion that came straight out of taxpayers' pockets.

Then taxpayers pay to indemnify those who suffered losses. In California alone this year, those losses topped \$2 billion.

Throw in the deaths, losses of livestock, outbuildings and other property and wildlife habitat and the whole system can best be described as a shambles.

That's why it's critically important that forest managers be allowed to do their jobs.

It's not easy. Our sister paper, the Capital Press, recently followed a single forest treatment plan from beginning to end.

In the case of the Five Buttes Project in Oregon's Cascade

Range, the plan took four years to complete. The environmental impact statement alone was 459 pages.

Instead of massive clear-cuts, the plan designated 60 areas totaling 7,800 acres that, when treated, would help prevent massive fires and protect Northern spotted owl habitat. The total size of the project was 160,000 acres, so only about 4.9% of the area would be directly impacted.

But then the lawyers got involved and everything ground to a halt. Hired by environmental groups and armed with laws such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Forest Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, they stopped the Five Buttes Project a year after it was approved.

A judge went along with their arguments. Only after the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals saw through the legal chatter and gave its approve was work on the project allowed to proceed.

By the time the work was finished, 12 years had passed.

That, in a nutshell, is a major reason foresters cannot keep up with the need to properly manage the 67.3 million acres of federal forests in Oregon, Washington, California and Idaho. That's an area about the size of Colorado.

Other reasons for delays include a lack of money — though it would surely be less costly than spending billions of dollars a year fighting monster blazes — and a lack of political will on the part of elected officials, many of whom still seem to believe the best forest is an unmanaged one.

Back to our road trip. As we drive through blackened forests it's easy to reach the conclusion that the system is out of balance. One lawsuit can shut down a treatment project for years, but the good it would do — and the money it would save taxpayers — gets short shrift.

That's not right, and Congress owes it to the American public to fix it. We can manage the forests now, or pay more later to clean up the mess.



## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Support your fellow business

We've talked in previous articles about ways to improve sales during this wild roller coaster ride we're on. Here are more ideas that may not only benefit your bottom line but help give another business a boost.

It begins by thinking outside the box. Perhaps instead of seeing another business as a competitor, think of them as another potential customer and be creative about working together. Consider the following:

- Initiate an after-hours Zoom call inviting a variety of different business owners. Brainstorm on ways you can cross-promote and directly support each other. Much of what you can do won't cost a penny.
- Write a positive review or testimonial on social media. Talk about a great item they carry or a specialty service they offer and post a picture



Greg Smith

on your Facebook page (personal and business). Ask them to the same.

- Go live on Facebook. Share the name of your favorite restaurant and suggest a special menu item. Maybe send a gift card from your business to a stand-out server.

• Consider a mini "shop-hop" in which customers are entered to win a gift basket featuring items from each establishment.

• Cross-market gift items. Perhaps your killer gourmet marinades and sauces are offered at a specialty meat market across town.

Obviously, the goal is to generate more revenue for your business, but do not be afraid to work together. It's not about giving a fellow entre-

preneur a competitive edge. It's helping ensure that as many businesses in your community survive as possible.

Finally, most people are more committed than ever to shopping locally. Vibrant businesses working together have a better chance of anchoring customers. Also, by showing your own support both as a business owner and private individual, you'll garner goodwill and help ensure the business community — which includes your own company — will have a brighter holiday and future.

Greg Smith is the director of the Eastern Oregon University Small Business Development Center located at 1607 Gekeler Lane, Room 148 in La Grande. For free, confidential business advising, call 541-962-1532 or email eousbdc@gmail.com.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### 'Children deserve the right to an education'

To the Editor:

We have seen this year how challenging and stressful distance learning can be, as well as how much children need to be surrounded by their peers. In the upcoming Oregon state legislative session in January, a bill will be introduced that will remove children from the school system and force them into distance learning or homeschooling. The time is now to say enough is enough. Parents should be allowed to give their child the educational options that best fit their family.

Please call or write to your Oregon state representative and senator and tell them you oppose LC 1701 and that it should not be brought to any committees as a bill during this or any future legislative session. Visit [oregonlegislature.gov/find-yourlegislator/leg-search.html](http://oregonlegislature.gov/find-yourlegislator/leg-search.html) to find the name and contact information of your legislators.

All of Oregon's children deserve the right to an education as their families see fit.

Claire Young  
Medford

### 'A holiday present to parents and friends interested in climate change'

To the Editor:

Think about giving this book as a holiday present to parents and friends interested in climate change and doing something about it: "The Parents' Guide to Climate Revolution – 100 ways to build a fossil-free future, raise empowered kids, and still get a good night's sleep" by Mary DeMocker, New World Library, 2018.

Mary deMocker has written an inspiring book jammed packed with over 100 ways to empower your children to learn about climate change and do something about it.

The ideas are not only a practical guide for helping kids but a practical guide for living. It's about working with others in the community to get things done. There are so many good ideas and suggestions on how to take action to demand a fossil fuel free future only a few are noted here. Become politically active. Get facts from web sites like fact-check.org and opensecrets.org.

Check out youth activists on [earthguardians.org](http://earthguardians.org). Escort Big Oil from museums and off campus.

Demand that cultural and educational institutions stop taking money from coal, oil and gas companies and remove industry representatives from their boards.

Ask friends, colleges, churches and insurance companies to divest from fossil fuel stocks.

Read Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical addressed to every person living on the planet that calls for bold climate action to treat global warming as a moral issue.

See [laudatosi.org](http://laudatosi.org). Other religious leaders have joined the chorus. Make polluters pay with carbon pricing.

Join Citizens Climate Lobby to put a fee on carbon at [citizens-climatelobby.org](http://citizens-climatelobby.org).

Identify top polluters at [carbonmajors.org](http://carbonmajors.org). At the end she calls on us to jump in to build a bridge to a future in which children thrive.

A future that is healthy and equitable. For more information, visit [marydemocker.com](http://marydemocker.com).

Marjorie Thelen  
Burns



**Blue Mountain EAGLE**  
Published every Wednesday by eMEDIA group

### 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

### 1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION RATES (including online access)

Grant County .....\$45  
Everywhere else in U.S. ....\$57

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

Copyright © 2020 Blue Mountain Eagle All rights reserved. No part of this publication covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means — graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, taping or information storage and retrieval systems — without written permission of the publisher.