

Wild and Scenic designation needs clarity

It was a bit surprising to discover that some of the rivers proposed for Wild and Scenic designation were dried up or creeks, streams or gulches — not really rivers at all.

Missteps like that go to the heart of criticisms of sweeping legislation that paints a broad brush, but fails to look at the finer details.

A Senate bill that would designate nearly 4,700 miles as part of The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in Oregon is being criticized for including hundreds of small creeks, streams and gulches that were found to be completely dry, according to the Capital Press and its reporter, George Plaven. The Capital Press is a part of the EO Media Group, along with the Blue Mountain Eagle.

The American Forest Resources Council, a trade group representing the timber industry, did an analysis of the proposal, arguing that certain non-river segments under consideration “do not meet the intent or definition of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.”

Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, both Democrats, introduced the River Democracy Act on Feb. 3. A year prior to that, there was a well-attended open house in Bend, where many submitted comments on which rivers should be protected from development along their banks. The legislation came out of more than 15,000 nominations submitted by the public.

But according to the forest group, just 15% of the waterways are actually labeled as “rivers.” Out of 886 segments, 752 are identified as “streams,” rather than rivers. Another 33 are identified as “gulches,” one as a “draw” and 17 were “unnamed tributaries.”

The bill would roughly triple the number of wild and scenic rivers across Oregon, intending to protect fish and wildlife, water quality and outdoor recreation values. It also increases wild and scenic river corridors from a quarter-mile to a half-mile on both sides, which adds up to approximately 3 million acres of protected land — an area approximately the size of Connecticut.

Cutting timber along streambanks is a well-known cause of sediment in rivers and a degradation of fish and wildlife habitat. But, the forest council’s president, Travis Joseph, makes a good point that restricting the ability to harvest trees when the state is in a grip of catastrophic wildfires and where thinning of trees can reduce the wildfire risk is detrimental to the bill’s intent.

Wyden says those claims are addressed in the bill, calling for coordination between state and federal agencies to allow for forest thinning.

But there needs to be some balance here. We can see the Willamette, Deschutes and Santiam rivers gaining some protection against development as they are truly wild and scenic rivers.

Even the headwaters of these rivers deserve attention.

But intermittent streams are not really rivers and should not be considered as such. We encourage some clarity on the issues, especially how state and federal agencies would be held accountable for working together.

And perhaps removing some of the nonflowing streams from the list of this important designation would go a long way to boosting its credibility as a new piece of legislation.



SHOOTING THE BREEZE COOL WATER

With this Hadean, diabolical heat wave, I’m reminded of a classic country ballad “Cool Water.” The longing for a cool drink in a seemingly endless desert is not lost upon my ears. It’s been covered by many different artists over the years, but I think Lorne Greene does it best. Off and on in my life I’ve worked in agriculture, and as those of you similarly employed can attest, our work needs done in spite of infernal or inclement weather. As a result, being out in such extreme climates can take a toll on our bodies, especially if we are exerting ourselves physically.

Staying hydrated goes without saying, but how much water should we pack if water is not easily accessible? In heat such as we are seeing right now I personally have consumed in excess of one gallon of water throughout the space of the day. Having some way to keep your water cool will also help. Fair-com-



Dale Valade

plected folks such as myself should also bring along copious amounts of sunscreen and a bit of aloe vera to treat the inevitable radiation burns. Wear a hat with a brim to further protect your neck, ears and face from these harmful ultraviolet rays. As another aside, if you take St. John’s Wort, you may consider avoiding it this time of year as it increases one’s sensitivity to the sun.

Ultimately, I would advise getting to work earlier and then quitting earlier to minimize your exposure wherever possible. If you do experience heat stroke, which I have, you can find yourself in serious trouble if you don’t get out of the sun in a hurry. Luckily for me, I had coworkers nearby to drag me to safety. Consider more frequent communications with the members

of your crew or arranging a regular check in with somebody if you work or hunt alone. If you don’t have a swamp cooler, air conditioner, central air or a fan of any kind, splurge and buy one. You’ll be glad you did.

Hunting season is just around the corner with early damage elk tags, pronghorn antelope season and bow season beginning in August. Take proper precautions to prepare. It’s amazing how fast the heat can take its toll. With the west forecast to have the worst drought in over 100 years, let’s all join in hoping that “way up there, he’ll hear our prayer and show us where there’s water!”

How are you beating the heat? Write to us at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com and check us out on Facebook for additional content.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Idaho takes a different direction

To the Editor:
On Aug. 4, Grant County Court is having its first public meeting required by the ballot measure passed in May regarding Greater Idaho. Now is the time to discuss the issues and let the commissioners know if we want to be part of Idaho or remain with Oregon. Which government do we feel best represents the values of Grant County?

In recent history, several things have occurred in Oregon that have an effect on our lives in Grant County:

1. Gun storage law.
2. Allowing public camping in all publicly owned spaces, such as sidewalks and parks.
3. Decriminalization of drugs.
4. Imposing a corporate activity tax on businesses, including ranches, with commercial activity in excess of \$1 million.
5. The Oregon Department of Education advertising an optional ethnomathematics course (critical race theory) for teachers in an email newsletter.

Rural Oregon is ignored by Salem

and the government in all matters. Idaho has taken a different direction:

1. Lower taxes.
2. Permitless gun carrying is legal, and they have “stand your ground” laws.
3. Enforcement of drug laws.
4. Banned CRT (critical race theory) from being taught.

Let your voice be heard. Join me at the Grant County Courthouse on Aug. 4 at 9 a.m. It is time for our voices to be heard.

Sandie Gilson
Mt. Vernon

Revisit River Democracy Act

To the Editor:
I have written to U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden four times since March 26, 2021, about the “outstanding remarkable values” of the streams he proposed to list under the Wild and Scenic Act. I have had absolutely no response. What is going on?

Here are the remarks he made on Feb. 3, 2021, about the SB 192 River Democracy Act for himself

and Sen. Merkley found here on page s320:

<https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/2021/2/3/senate-section/article/S319-2>

He says for himself and Sen. Merkley, “It is important to note that each river segment in this bill was selected for specific outstanding remarkable values. A chart that shows the specific outstanding remarkable values for each one can be found at <https://www.wyden.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ORVs%20chart%202-2-21.pdf>.”

This link does not provide any information at all or lead to any chart. I have repeatedly asked for this information and have received nothing. Maybe you have not really done any research or study on these streams. Listing Bull Run Creek as a wild river when it is mostly a dry channel seems to indicate that you need to do a lot more research before you actually propose designations of these streams. What are your future plans to study, and correct the many inaccurate designations of these streams?

Ken Alexander
Unity



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.

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 - **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313, oregonlegislature.gov.
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