

OUR VIEW

# Senators shoot wide of the mark with wolf letter

**P**ardon us if we stifle a yawn in response to a letter 21 U.S. senators penned the other day.

New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker and Michigan Sen. Gary Peters led the letter-writing campaign to call on Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to protect gray wolves from being hunted for about eight months. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is a part of the Interior Department, is already reviewing the status of wolves in the West. The senators just fret, needlessly, that a lot of wolves will be killed in the meantime.

Judging from the language of the letter, one would think wolves were again on the verge of extermination. In reality, their problem was with states such as Idaho and Montana, which have plenty of wolves.

For example, Idaho has an average of about 1,500 wolves. The total harvest of wolves during each of the past two years was about 500 wolves, but the populations have rebounded both years to 1,500. Reproduction is a specialty of wolves.

The Capital Press previously reported that the state Fish and Game Commission last summer established wolf seasons from Nov. 15 to March 31 on public land in 43 hunting units where elk are below population objectives or where there are histories of chronic livestock depredation. It left unchanged all other wolf hunting and trapping seasons on public land. Idaho has 99 hunting units.

That hardly sounds like wolves will be eradicated. In fact, that sounds a lot like prudent management of a predator.

Similarly, Montana, which has about 1,100 wolves, has been adjusting its wolf seasons to avoid conflicts with other protected species. A total of 38 wolves have been harvested this fall, according to the state's Fish and Wild-

life Commission.

Yet the wolf experts in the U.S. Senate want the hunting stopped.

"If continued unabated for this hunting season, these extreme wolf eradication policies will result in the death of hundreds of gray wolves and will further harm federally protected ecosystems like Yellowstone," the senators wrote, referring to three wolves that were killed outside the park in Montana.

The other authors were Patrick Leahy, D-Vt.; Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y.; Jack Reed, D-R.I.; Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.; Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.; Jacky Rosen, D-Nev.; Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif.; Alex Padilla, D-Calif.; Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I.; Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii; Chris Van Hollen, D-Md.; Chris Murphy, D-Conn.; Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill.; Catherine Cortez-Masto, D-Nev.; Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.; Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio; Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii; Robert Menendez, D-N.J.; and Ed Markey, D-Mass.

You'll note that, with the exception of Upper Michigan, none of the states they represent has a significant number of wolves. We suspect the purpose of the letter was more to curry favor with environmental groups than to protect wolves, which, by the way, are doing just fine. They continue to spread across the West without any help.

Here's an idea. We propose the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service deliver 200 wolves to each of the states those senators represent. Send 200 each to New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, California, Ohio, Illinois, Nevada, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Maryland.

And don't forget about Hawaii.

Let's just see how that works.



COMMENTARY

## River bill has big problems

**S**en. Ron Wyden has proposed adding over 4,700 miles of waterways to the federal Wild & Scenic Rivers System in Oregon. With half-mile no-touch buffers, the River Democracy Act will apply access and management restrictions to 3 million acres of federal land, much of it in our communities in Northeastern Oregon. There are significant issues still unaddressed and important questions still unanswered for such a consequential bill that is now moving through the U.S. Senate.

For starters, there no detailed maps available from federal agencies that allow Oregonians to see where these designations are located, and how these designations would affect private property, public access, and other traditional uses such as ranching. The only available map on the Internet appears to be produced by a Portland environmental group that helped write the bill.

Secondly, the original Wild & Scenic Rivers Act was intended to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition. From a list provided by the bill's supporters, we know that 85 percent of the bill's Wild & Scenic designations would be applied to small creeks, gulches, draws and unnamed tributaries — many of which are not free-flowing and do not even carry water throughout the year.



Sen. Lynn Findley



Rep. Mark Owens

If these small creeks, gulches, draws and unnamed tributaries are worthy of such a designation, why does this bill subvert the careful administrative study and review process under the original act? And why does this bill impose half-mile buffers in these areas, when the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act only calls for quarter-mile buffers?

Federal lands are at high risk of wildfire and need active management, thinning and fuels reduction work. Wildfires in recent years have scorched watersheds and degraded water quality as sediment and ash is deposited into our river systems. In 2020, over 76 percent of acres burned in Oregon occurred on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

Management is already restricted in riparian areas. Would imposing even more restrictions through Wild & Scenic designations and half-mile buffers really make it easier to reduce wildfire risks?

Oregonians are right to ask why

the River Democracy Act will add more restrictions to 3 million acres at a time when land management agencies are already struggling to implement proven and proactive forest management activities to reduce the risks of wildfires to forests and watersheds.

The reasons for agency inaction include a lack of funding and personnel, and the cost and time it takes them to satisfy exhaustive analysis and regulatory requirements. In addition to the half-mile buffers, the River Democracy Act will require agencies to prepare exhaustive river management plans that will take years to complete, drain agency resources, and open the door to ongoing and additional litigation.

Proponents of the bill claim the River Democracy Act will support wildfire prevention efforts and protect private property rights. Yet history shows that Wild & Scenic River designations only encourage more lawsuits and analysis paralysis, especially where they intersect with private property and other public land uses.

As this bill advances through Congress, citizens should be asking: what does the bill actually do, why is it necessary, and does it really benefit rural and frontier Oregon?

Sen. Lynn Findley (Senate District 30) and Rep. Mark Owens (House District 60) represent Eastern Oregon in the state Legislature.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

## Tastes like chicken — or does it?

**O**ccasionally someone offers me an unusual food. To entice me to eat it, they say, "It tastes like chicken."

My gold standard for chicken developed from a family experience. One year we bought two batches of baby chicks — one batch to grow into laying hens, the others, a hybrid meaty breed, were destined for Sunday dinners and picnics featuring fried chicken.

This butcher flock, noted to be fast-growing birds, were big eaters. It seemed as though they guzzled down a semi-load of grain and a day later they looked like small turkeys. When butchered, the meat birds averaged 13 pounds. Drumsticks looked like the kind of muscle one expects to see on a professional bodybuilder. We suspected the chickens spent their nights pumping iron and their days eating.

After the meaty birds were dressed out, we roasted, baked, fried and turned some into rich-bodied soup



Jean Ann Moultrie

laced with homemade noodles — the egg noodles courtesy of laying hens. The meat turned out lean, moist and full of flavor — our gold standard chickens.

When someone say a food "tastes like chicken," I haven't found they are speaking about our gold standard chickens. It seems more likely they are referring to a 10-year-old rooster with a terminal case of shingles.

Now when someone fixes me food that "tastes like chicken," I know I'm offered something that tastes somewhere between pan-fried dog food and a diced and chopped tractor tire boiled in a cream sauce.

The list goes on as to what some people invite others to eat: alligator, beetles, locusts, woolly mammoth, snake, etc. — all reported to have "chicken-like flavor." A cook reports

the snake stinks during the frying process, which should be a clue to diners about its palatability.

These chicken-flavored foodies don't malign beef. I've never heard anyone say, "Crocodile tastes like Angus beef steaks."

A club titled Friends of Poultry united to curb the "like chicken" movement. Fear had risen that this practice unchecked could spread to other foods like lava washing over sugar cane fields. Someone could make a claim about a vegetable. "Boiled cabbage tastes like carrot cake with cream cheese frosting." Or "mashed rutabagas taste like Marionberry pie."

To combat this, a Truth in Flavors bill has been drafted which includes notice that one cannot claim something tastes like chicken — unless it is chicken. Public discussion to follow.

Jean Ann Moultrie is a Grant County writer. It has been rumored that she offered houseguests oatmeal that tastes like chocolate chip cookies.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Can't control smoke from controlled burns

**To the editor:**  
I'm curious: What is the difference between "wildfire" smoke, that is hazardous and contributes to the greenhouse effect by sending carbon particles into the atmosphere, and all of the "controlled burns" smoke?

Maybe someone a little smarter than me can explain that. And maybe they can come up with another way to reduce fuels or thin out the amount that has built up

over the last 30 to 40 years. Please help!

Ken Koser  
Prairie City

### Biden has America on the edge of ruin

**To the editor:**  
Joe Blo works down at the sawmill piling lumber. He works 40 hours a week and makes, let's say, \$18 an hour, or roughly \$2,880 a month before taxes.

Joe Biden works at the White House doing nothing. He works (?)

hours a week and makes \$400,000 a year with probably no taxes, plus benefits — medical, Air Force One and on and on!

So after nine months, Joe Blo has moved enough lumber to build God knows how many houses while Joe Biden has screwed up so bad he has ruined God knows how many American lives.

Something is not right here and needs to be corrected real soon.

We are on the edge of ruin and people need to wake up and realize this.

Eddy L. Negus  
Prairie City



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