

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Commentary: Let's balance our water needs among us all

What does a typical day in beautiful Central Oregon look like? Maybe it's a crisp winter day and you're thinking about heading to Mt. Bachelor. Or it's a summer afternoon and you find yourself hungry because you just spent the day floating the Deschutes River, so you decide to take a stroll down to the nearest local brewery. Upon being seated you are greeted by a server who speaks highly of the specials on the menu, as well as the local beer and spirits that are being offered. Both the drink and food menus boast about the ingredients, coming from local, small family farms just minutes down the road. Without even realizing it, your lips part, and you have a subtle smile, feeling good because you know that what you are going to eat is healthy, locally grown, and environmentally friendly. As you bask in the sun and enjoy the charismatic atmosphere and the fluttering woody smell of the sprawling surroundings of pine trees, you find yourself excited about the deliciousness you are about to enjoy and begin to engage in conversation about your next Central Oregon adventure. Life is good.

But our way of life and the perfect day are in jeopardy, and most don't even realize it. The signs are all around us. The weapon being used is the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Several years ago, the Oregon spotted frog was listed as a threatened species. The Upper Deschutes River was listed as its critical habitat. Wickiup Reservoir sits above the Upper Deschutes and is used to store water in the wintertime, to be released in the summertime. Normally, in the summer months rivers tend to dry up but Wickiup helps to regulate and maintain the flow in the Deschutes River. That protects the ecosystems within. It also allows local farms to grow food.

The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), Water Watch of Oregon, Earth Justice and other radical environmental groups have infiltrated Central Oregon with the intent to have control and make decisions over our most precious resource - water.

Here are how these groups work. They file lawsuits against government organizations like Fish & Wildlife Services and the Bureau of Reclamation and they use the ESA as their tool. Overwhelming government agencies with lawsuits claiming



a decline in certain species results in the government agencies not being able to keep up and do their job. In turn, radical environmentalists set out to get more and more species listed as threatened or endangered. The aftermath forces so much on one species (even pitting one species against another) and a multitude of other things suffer. Simply put, the balance is thrown off.

But that is only part of the story. When non-profit environmental organizations file lawsuits against the federal government, they may be awarded attorney fees and expenses paid through a taxpayer-funded program called Equal Access to Justice. These groups have turned this tactic into a multi-million-dollar business.

Several years ago, government agencies, conservation groups, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation, water users and others throughout Central Oregon worked tirelessly because of the first lawsuit initiated by radical environmentalists, to create a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to mitigate and minimize impact on the Oregon spotted frog. The CBD did not participate in the development of the HCP, leaving it free to throw grenades from the sidelines.

Once you give a bully your lunch money, they always come back for more.

On January 12, CBD sent a letter of intent to sue the US Fish and Wildlife and Bureau of Reclamation. The letter claims the government violated the ESA because it did not rely on the best science, "including its own prior findings, that the frog's survival and ultimate recovery requires winter flows of at least 600 cfs and a summer flow cap of 1,100 cfs."

That may, in our opinion, cause Wickiup to be drained to dangerously low levels from September to March. What will suffer from this imprudent "scientific" opinion?

Wickiup Reservoir may be near empty each spring, and lack of storage in the reservoir will compromise recreation on the Deschutes River because of a drastic decline in flows.

Wildlife and aquatic species will suffer throughout all Central Oregon, and farmers will no longer be able to provide locally grown food. Fields that were once sequestering carbon and helping combat climate change are now going to be dry and desolate, working completely against global warming.

Food will be sourced out and freighted in from miles away, not environmentally friendly, which will cause the need for preservatives to make the trip. Jobs will be lost, businesses closed, and property taxes won't get paid.

Schools, police, fire departments, and many other agencies will suffer resulting financial burdens. The cost of food and living will rise and correlate directly with increased homelessness. Radical environmental organizations are successfully accomplishing this all over the United States.

We need to get this right. We are blessed to be able to live, work and play in Central Oregon. Why are we letting outside bullies come in and dictate our way of life and our livelihoods?

With a common-sense approach and modern technology, we can conserve, utilize, and distribute our most precious resource - water - all while maintaining a healthy ecosystem. We must find a perfect balance so that our kids, grandkids, and everyone after us can experience a beautiful life where everything thrives, and everything wins; anything less than that is a failure.

Life depends on water, but the reservoir depends on us. All of us.

— Perfect Balance USA

Perfect Balance USA is a nonprofit organization formed to educate people on the importance of finding a balance where everything can thrive and everything can win; without tipping the scale so far in one direction and focusing so much on one thing, that catastrophe hits in many other areas. The Board of Directors includes Jeremy Symons, JoHanna Symons, Trish Backsen, Shawn Vibbert and Jos Poland. We are based across the entire Deschutes Basin in Central Oregon, and we have no political persuasion except finding common sense approaches to attacking challenges and finding balanced solutions for recreation, wildlife, threatened species and agriculture.

