

**OPINIONS**

**Science denial threatens us all**

BY ALAN JOURNET

For decades I taught science process to university students in Missouri. The study of how we know what we know was a critical component. Those students never rejected science as a reliable way to understand how the physical world works.

I'm not an infectious disease specialist, but I'm conscious, I have a brain, and I spent those decades teaching biology! What we face now is more than a coronavirus crisis; it's a crisis of science denial. Our Republican leaders are promoting ideas about treating COVID-19 that are unscientific nonsense. We know not to swallow disinfectants because they're toxic. Because we know that ultra-violet light causes cancer and suppresses immune responses, we were concerned years ago about the hole in the ozone layer that made it possible for increased solar ultra-violet light to permeate our atmosphere.

Science denier-in chief Donald Trump ignored many daily security briefings he received early this year warning of a pending coronavirus pandemic. Had he read them and accepted science, he could have initiated a rational federal response. Instead, Trump spent weeks happy-talking, calling reports attacking his handling of the threat a hoax, doing nothing, and promoting idiocy.

Medical science tells us clearly the only way to protect Americans from this disease is to shelter in place, reduce contacts, and wear a mask when outside to reduce contagion lest we are non-symptomatic disease carriers. Now this anti-science, hoax-promoting president has ordered contagion-hotbed meat-packing plants to open and has encouraged cult-following, anti-science governors and representatives across the nation likewise to reject medical science and open up the country, which will lead to more COVID-19 deaths.

While this poses an immediate threat to the nation, many science deniers

don't confine themselves to rejecting medical science. Many also deny climate science. I'd like to refute some current misinformation assertions.

The terms "global warming" and "climate change" have clearly distinct meanings: increased atmospheric greenhouse gas concentration causes global warming; this warming results in consequences such as the increased wildfire risk that Applegate residents are experiencing.

The claim that atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration remained level through ice ages is refuted by ice core data revealing consistently lower carbon dioxide levels during glacial than during interglacial periods.

The claim that temperature change preceded carbon dioxide change derives from ice core data suggesting warming preceded carbon dioxide increase by 800 years. This misunderstanding was corrected by Parrenin, et al. (2013). Meanwhile, Shakun, et al. (2012) explained that the end of the recent glacial period was triggered by the Earth's orbital cycle causing freshwater ice to melt into the oceans, resulting in carbon dioxide escape. Ninety percent of the temperature increase followed this carbon dioxide increase, not the reverse.

While constant assaults on scientific understanding posed by science deniers misinform the public, medical science deniers threaten our lives immediately, and climate science deniers pose a long-term threat to us, our children, and life we value across the planet.

The claim that coronavirus is like the flu and the assertion that climate science consensus is a hoax are both dangerous misrepresentations of consensus science.

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**Why we need to save Pipe Fork**

BY SANDY OLKEN

The Pipe Fork Creek in Williams is paramount in its importance for the water it provides to our valley. Issuing from Sugarloaf and Grayback mountains, it flows into East Fork of Williams Creek before continuing on to the Applegate and Rogue rivers, providing a wealth of cool, clear water to each watershed. Josephine County, the owner of much of the land around the Pipe Fork, plans to sell it for clear-cutting. The rippling effects that will occur should this happen will have vast consequences.

The Rogue River is world-renowned for its spectacular beauty and salmon fishing opportunities. Pipe Fork is an important high-quality habitat—the source of three major salmon runs that depend on its clear waters for nesting and egg-laying. The cold water issuing from the surrounding forested mountains helps to maintain the necessary water temperatures for salmon to spawn.

The soil erosion caused by roads built for logging and by the systematic removal of all trees on the steep hillsides threatens not only salmon, but a multitude of aquatic life, wildlife, and people that depend on its unspoiled water.

The Pipe Fork area is a rare gem in our community and is so important and valued to the health of all that rely on its pure waters that it's being considered for a Wild and Scenic designation. Because Pipe Fork is the main source for the drinking water and agricultural and livestock needs of Williams, its protection is crucial. There is nothing more important to life than water, and maintaining water quality must be our priority.

Clear-cutting this rich, cool, and moist landscape that guards a cold, pristine water source will mean less water as the shadeless heat evaporates the water more quickly. As the seasons get drier and warmer, we need to enact practices that protect and enrich our water sources.

The Pipe Fork area has the easternmost stands of old-growth Port Orford Cedar in Oregon, as well as other old-growth trees, which are more fire-resilient than younger trees. At a time when wildfires are becoming more frequent and intense, eliminating the fire resistance of larger diameter trees is potentially unwise.

Dr. Timothy Ingalsbee, executive director of Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology (FUSEE) and senior wildland fire ecologist certified by the Association for Fire Ecology, cites studies showing that "forests that have been degraded by commercial logging, livestock grazing, or fire suppression typically burn more severely than native forests that have not been subjected to these past land abuses and are more resilient to fire."

Older trees are more likely to survive fires and to spread seeds after a fire. Also, the young seedlings planted close together after a clear-cut are highly flammable and for the first couple of decades, their thin bark and stems and proximity to the ground make them highly vulnerable to fire. We should, at all costs, avoid logging in fire-adapted old-growth and mature forests.

Please write to the Josephine County Commissioners to voice your opposition to this timber sale. Pipe Fork Creek is too precious and important to compromise through clear-cutting.

For more information, go to [williamscommunityforestproject.org](http://williamscommunityforestproject.org).

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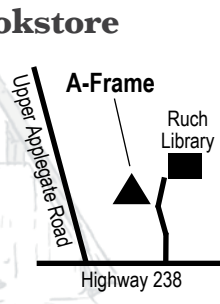
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