

Government excess costs water users billions

An editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* reveals the truth about the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: it isn't just small towns on the plains the agency is picking on with outrageous demands for new water plants. It's everyone.

"You can lead the Environmental Protection Agency to water, but you can't make it think," *The Journal* opines. "That's what New York City has learned after suggesting changes to costly, needless regulations that the federal government is imposing on Gotham."

The city wrote a 15-page letter to the agency explaining why meeting new federal regulations for drinking water will cost the city billions in unneeded improvements. One project with literally no benefit, *The Journal* says, is a \$1.6 billion cover for a 900-billion-gallon reservoir in Yonkers.

The agency says the cover is needed to prevent contamination by cryptosporidium, an organism that causes diarrhea. Government scientists claim the cover could prevent 112,000 to 365,000 cases a year, though in all of New York, only about 100 cases are reported each year.

So what if the city wastes \$1.6 billion in taxpayer dollars? *The Journal* says the city has spent \$15 billion since new water regulations came online in 2002, with the feds paying less than 1 percent of the bill.

Water users faced increases of 134 percent in that time.

The editorial points out that the U.S. Conference of Mayors joined New York in March proposing that the government subject this and similar projects to a cost-benefit analysis, showing that the benefits to society will at least match the price.

Instead, the agency sued the city.

It's no wonder that small towns like Oberlin and Atwood, Colby and Goodland get no hearing when forced to build costly new sewer and water plants their citizens really can't afford. Government scientists know what's good for us, and that's that, cost be hanged.

So the out-of-control juggernaut that is Environmental Protection just keeps rolling over city after city, state after state. Cost is no concern. Need is no concern. Standards have been set and will be met.

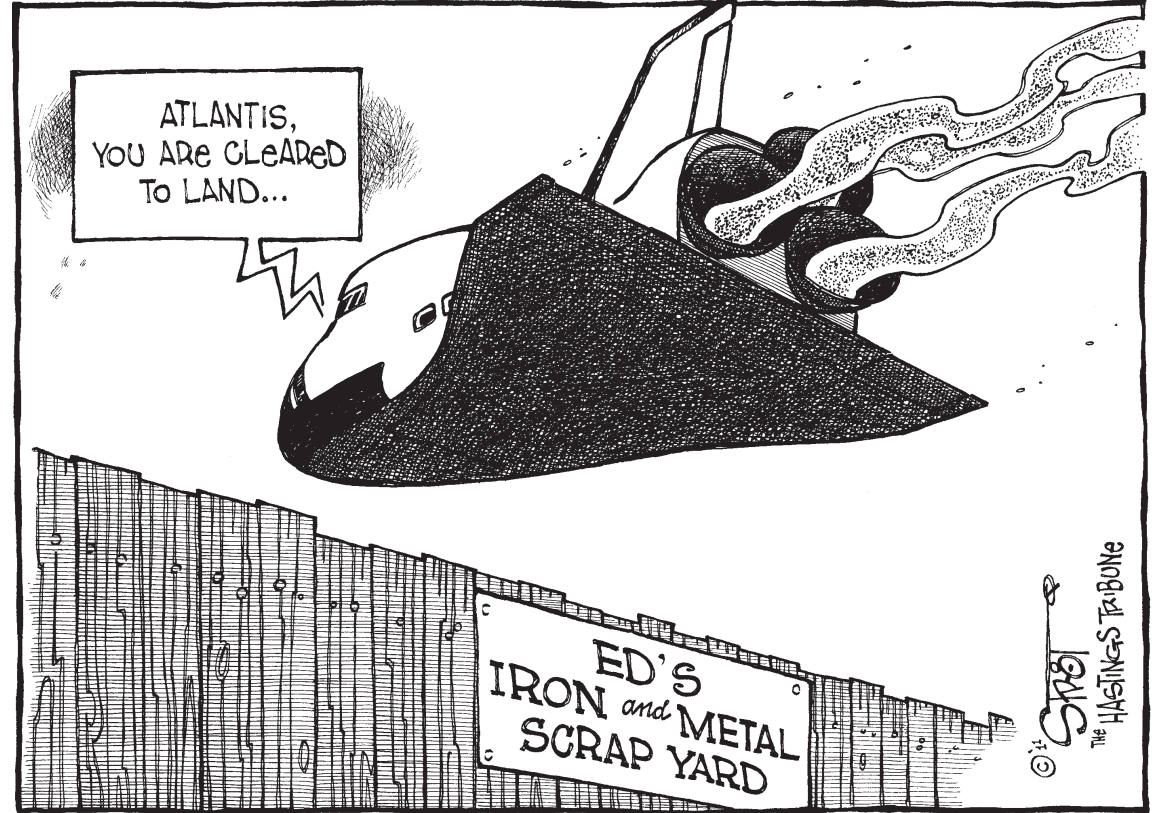
Many, like Oberlin, are being forced to meet standards for amounts of uranium and arsenic that couldn't even be measured a few years ago. People have been drinking our water for 125 years with no noticeable ill effects, except for the taste, but that's not the point.

The agency doesn't care if we can afford the work. It's no wonder living in this country costs more and more each year. It's not the taxes that are killing us, but the cost of regulation, in everything from water bills to electric power. And there's more to come; in Congress, no one dares to challenge an environmental edict lest they be branded as "ungreen."

Decisions that should be made on a practical, cost-effective basis instead are dictated based on arbitrary and often unreasonable standards. This dictatorship of regulation needs to stop, but none dares to oppose it.

And as we've seen, there's no city, no state big enough to resist. That is small comfort, however, to small-town residents hanging on in an uncertain economy and facing big bills for water and unnecessary water and sewer "updates."

If our senators, Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran, want to do something for their constituents and this country, this is the problem they would tackle. — *Steve Haynes*



Lure of rails draws him west

*Well, if they freed me from this prison,
If that railroad train was mine,
I bet I'd move out over a little,
Farther down the line...*

*And I'd let that lonesome whistle,
Blow my Blues away.
— "Folsom Prison Blues,"
Johnny Cash*

Some people ride to Sturgis every year. We hear the cry of that lonesome whistle. It's *The Denver Post's* train to Cheyenne Frontier Days.

How do you explain that call to the uninitiated?

First of all, it's a genuine steam engine, the last big one in service today that's never been retired. Union Pacific 844, a war baby born to move troops and heavy limiteds, survived into the 1960s in snow-melting service in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Then someone at headquarters in Omaha decided she'd be ideal for pulling excursions and special trains. The big engine's been at it ever since, thrilling many thousands with her steamboat whistle and flashing drivers.

Then there's the train, a genuine 1950s streamliner, 22 gleaming matched yellow, red and grey cars, looking every bit as good as they did when built back in the 1950s. The train features seven sparkling dome cars, a dance car, snacks and beverages at your first-class-size seat.

There's simply nothing like it in the world.

The train has been running every summer for 20 years now, revived by *Post* publisher Dean Singleton in 1991 to mark the paper's centennial. It's become a Denver tradition, and tickets sell out within a few days.

The original train to Frontier Days was designed by *Post* founder Frederick Bonfils to woo advertisers and politicians of the late Victorian Era. Only men were invited as guests; the only females aboard were leggy young women who gave out cigars and cigarettes. You couldn't buy a ticket; you had to be invited. And if you weren't, then likely you



Along the Sappa

By *Steve Haynes*
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weren't much in Colorado's power structure.

Today, you pay your money and get your tickets. Profits go to *The Post's* foundation. Most riders go year after year, the waiting list is long. It's not so much the rodeo; it's the atmosphere and the ride. Some go for the whole afternoon; others go shopping.

The train draws governors, senators, congressmen and billionaires. The rear three cars are reserved for invited VIPs, but most riders are just people who like trains, rodeos or both. We've been going for most of the last 20 years, missing only a few trips where we had something else to do, didn't get tickets or — one year — just missed the train.

It's a long day, if not a long trip. The train leaves Denver promptly at 7 a.m. The air-conditioned cars are crisp in the post-dawn coolness, and that feels pretty good after the weather on the plains the last couple of weeks.

The big steamer, backed by a historic diesel from the 1960s, eases out of town and heads north, parallel to the sparkling, snow-capped Front Range. The train rolls along "past houses, farms and fields" as the riders digest a continental breakfast, cinnamon rolls, fruit, yogurt and granola.

Along the route, hundreds line up at every crossing, park and field. Whole families wave to the big engine and the people on the train. Somehow, the word spreads.

On parallel U.S. 85, a couple dozen cars pace the train, slowing for the towns, taking pictures, speeding up in the country. The engineer lets the 844 gallop on at 60 mph, the maximum speed here, though she was built to run 100 and more.

Little, if any, film will die today, but thousands of photos and hours and hours of video will be framed. A pilot buzzes the train in a World War II era Stearman biplane. In Denver and again in Cheyenne, people gather up front to photograph the engine.

There's a big parade, and I'm amazed at Wyoming efficiency: instead of the traditional guys with brooms, a fleet of three street sweepers rolls up the end, scooping the horse manure and washing the pavement in one pass.

Buses take people to the rodeo grounds for a catered lunch before the show. Frontier Days, which claims to be the first rodeo, is like a county fair, a carnival, an Indian show and a stock exhibition all rolled into one, plenty of vendors and everything from hats to jewelry to trinkets and junk.

As the train pulls out for Denver at 5:30, everyone is tired from a day in the sun. They sit quietly, munching on box lunches and enjoying the cool air. But Cynthia wants to go to the dance car, where a country-rock band holds fourth. How could I imagine this would lead to a conversation with the son and grandson of a veteran editor I'd worked with at the old *Kansas City Times* more than 40 years ago?

But such is the cachet of the *Post* train; you meet people.

As we're rollin' home in the gathering dusk, the range turns golden, then purple, in the sunset. The train stops; someone has reported a pickup parked too near the tracks up ahead. We have to wait for police to shoo the offender away, so we'll be a little late.

No one seems to mind.

Mayor proud of city tax cut

It has been quite a busy last couple of weeks for the city. Several things have been going on that the council and others have been working hard at.

First on the list, the council has voted to publish a proposed City Budget for 2012. I am pleased, because it looks as if the city's property-tax levy will be lower than this year.

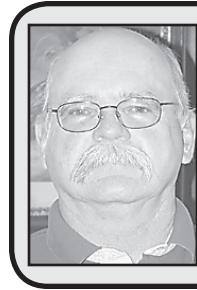
Presently it looks as though we will be able to reduce the levy by about 9 mills. We are currently at \$7.01, and we are proposing 77.95 for 2012.

The biggest reason for this reduction is that we have paid off some debt that the city had, and some belt tightening in the general fund.

The city's levy is quite high — currently the 10th highest in the state — for a variety of reasons, but with a lot of hard work by City Administrator Karen Larson, administrative assistant Steve Zadow and the council, I believe that we have made a big stride in getting it on track.

We have also reduced the amount of money to be transferred out of the electric fund by more than \$50,000. The biggest reason for us being able to do this is because of the dedication of the Gateway staff cutting expenses. All in all, I am very pleased with the outcome of the budget process.

Next on the list is that we have



Mayor's Moment

By *Bill Riedel*
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been in negotiations with a couple of different electric providers, as our contract is up at the end of this year. It appears as though we will not see any increase in cost on the new contract with either supplier, at least not at this time. This is really good news, knowing that we will be raising water rates to pay for the treatment plant required by the federal government.

Speaking of water, Councilman Jim Miesner, along with our engineers, is looking for a cleaner source of water and testing of some existing wells for quality as well as flow. The council voted on trying one last time to find water that did not have the levels of uranium and other minerals.

The last thing I will ramble on about this week is the airport project. We received last week the approval to solicit bids for the rehabilitation of runway 17-35 (our current runway) and the taxiway leading to the terminal and hangers. The grant from the Federal Aviation

Administration for this phase of the airport was finally approved and we are finally on our way to beginning construction.

Today, we received a letter from Washington noting that there is a good possibility that the agency could be shut down due to the impasse of Congress on raising the debt ceiling. It looks as though we may be on hold once again.

In closing, I would like to let everyone know that Jeremy Talley, our cemetery sexton, is looking into a new electronic directory. He had the vendor put on a presentation and I think everyone present was impressed with the capabilities and thought that it would be a wonderful addition to the cemetery.

Jeremy has taken the lead on this project and would welcome any feedback and support, especially donations or memorials for this project. Please stop by and see him and see what this is all about.

And please support our local merchants!

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Policies threaten credit, recovery

Just over a year ago, President Obama signed into law the Dodd-Frank Act, promising the 2,300-page bill — with 400 new regulations and mandates — would bring about tough Wall Street reform. But this legislation has missed its mark and landed squarely on Main Street, impacting community banks, business and consumers across America.

A small-town banker put it plainly at a recent U.S. Senate hearing on Dodd-Frank's impact on lending when he said, "The Act will add an additional enormous burden; it has stimulated an environment of uncertainty and has added new risks that will inevitably translate into fewer loans."

In Kansas, that means fewer loans to small businesses that want to expand and fewer loans to farmers and ranchers who need to fund operations through harvest. And fewer loans mean fewer jobs.

With national unemployment rising to 9.2 percent in June — marking 29 straight months of unemployment above 8 percent — the last thing we need is more government intrusion to slow down economic growth. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated that over the next 10 years, Dodd-Frank will drain \$27 billion directly from the economy in the form of new fees and assessments on lenders.

Community banks are working every day to make credit and financial services available, but when the message coming from Washington is more regulation and higher costs, it is no wonder banks are not lending, businesses are not hiring, and consumers are not spending.



On the Potomac

By *Sen. Jerry Moran*
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One generator of great uncertainty is the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, one of the key components of the law. The bureau opened its doors last week without accountable leadership or robust Congressional oversight. From debit cards to auto loans, overregulation by the bureau could further restrict credit for consumers and small businesses.

The bureau's current structure allows for a single, unelected director to define his own jurisdiction, rather than aboard or commission like most agencies charged with financial oversight. The director is allowed to set his own budget without Congressional approval. Finally, the bureau has no meaningful input from bank regulators.

Forty-three of my Senate colleagues and I have asked President Obama to address these faults, but our requests have been categorized as political rhetoric. This is not about politics. This is about protecting consumers and job creators.

I have little doubt Wall Street banks can afford the army of staff necessary to comply with the coming mountains of new regulations, but I am concerned about the hundreds of community banks and credit unions Kansans depend on.

At my request, Legacy Bank President Frank Suellentrop of Wichita recently testified before the Senate Banking Committee about the future of community banks.

"There are many bankers frustrated by the rules, regulations and examinations and looking to possibly get out of the banking business in the next several years," he said, "and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has not yet begun to issue its regulations."

The government is not a creator of jobs, but Congress and the administration can create an environment where businesses can grow and start hiring again. Until banks are willing and able to make prudent loans to hometown customers, no jobs will be created and our economic recovery will continue to lag.

From the Bible

Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. While I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. — *Psalms 146: 1-3*