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Guest column: In My View writer ill-informed about water, ranching, farming

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By Olaf Bolken

On May 23 on the editorial page, I read a very disturbing “In My View” by George Wuerthner. At first, I thought, how could anyone be so ill-informed, and I almost laughed. Then, I got to thinking. How many of the younger generation may fall for his misinformation?

I was born and raised on a homestead in North Dakota 80 years ago, and other than 4 years in the Navy, I have lived on a farm or small ranch all my life. I bought a small ranch in Terrebonne 46 years ago and live on the same ranch.

Some points of misinformation in Wuerthner’s article:

Other than years ago when they raised potatoes in Central Oregon, very few small farmers have grown food for what he considers direct human consumption, such as corn, lettuce, veggies, melons, etc. That is because the growing season here is not suited for that.

When he states, “it does not make sense to use irrigation water to grow alfalfa to waste on cows,” it’s apparent he is a vegetarian and does not eat beef.

Also, he is not aware that much of the alfalfa grown here is transported to the valley to feed milk cows. Does he not use milk, butter, cheese? Does he not know alfalfa is used to feed many other animals?

Does he not know in Jefferson County, they raise much more than alfalfa? Grain

that is used to feed chickens?

Does he not use eggs. Does he wear leather goods? Jackets, shoes, belts, etc.

Does he not know these are made from cow hides?

Has he checked the fields in the Madras, Culver area? They raise onions, garlic, carrots and other plants for seed.

They produce tons of seed that are used to plant gardens in areas where these veggies grow to produce food for what he considers “direct human consumption.”

I read that he wants more water in the river for spotted frogs. Has he seen a spotted frog? Less irrigation water is used now than 100 years ago, and the spotted frogs are still here. I hope they multiply by the thousands. I loved eating fried frog legs as a youngster when camping while fixing fence to keep cattle in. Maybe a young farmer could start raising spotted frogs and make a living by selling them for direct human consumption.

He complains about his tax dollars being used by irrigation districts to ramp up work in water conservation and fish and wildlife restoration such as improving flows for the spotted frog.

Why, when our irrigation users and districts try hard to please, do nonirrigators complain that we are wasting water and the state should take it away from us?

Why, when we want to put in underground pipe in the canals to keep water from escaping into the ground, do people complain because they love to see the canal water run past their house?

Yes, recreation is nice, but raising alfalfa for feed for animals that produce food, is more important. Are you not glad there are farmers-ranchers and farm kids working hard seven days a week so you have plenty of food to eat and do not

have to raise it yourself or live off of catching fish and frogs?

Go fishing, recreating and counting spotted frogs, but leave the amount of water that ranchers, farmers have used for more than 100 years alone.

I could write a book on how misinformed that article was that Wuerthner wrote. But I am limited as to amount the paper will publish.

Do not be suckered in on misinformation about irrigation water.

— *Olaf Bolken lives in Terrebonne.*

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