

We'd like to forecast an end to the sequester

It's difficult to watch helplessly as fellow citizens suffer injury, death and loss. Once again, the nation has to grapple with the age-old question of why bad things happen to good people as a steady dose of news reports chronicle the destruction in Moore, OK after a huge tornado roared through that city on Monday.

There's not much we can do when it comes to reigning in Mother Nature. The suffering currently taking place in Oklahoma, however, should give us all pause and a reason to reconsider a manufactured crisis that hit our country in March – namely, the sequester.

It's a man-made disaster with a not-so-complex solution if you throw in a bit of hard work and compromise on the part of our political leaders.

budget cuts may give us a warm, fuzzy feeling as we imagine some entity having to do some belt-tightening just as we have. Those good feelings, however, may not last long. Those cuts to the National Weather Service? Well, there's really not much good about them. Check out what the president of the American Meteorological Society says it means in practice:

“The public may take for granted a tornado warning or satellite loop of an approaching hurricane. Likewise, the public probably just assumes that they will have 5- to 9-day warning of storms like Sandy; 15 to 60 minutes lead time for tornadic storms approaching their home; an airline with appropriate data for safe air travel; or a military with reliable information to avoid hazardous weather on a mission protecting our freedom. However, these capabilities “can” and “will” worsen/degrade if we cut weather balloon launches, cut investments in the latest computing technology for our models, reduce Doppler radar maintenance, delay satellite launches, or shatter employee morale ... I am honestly concerned that we will regress in capability and this will jeopardize lives, property, and our security.”



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“We fear that government leaders, entrenched in their my-way-or-the-highway approach to budgeting, will ignore the consequences of their own actions. They will cite the problems previous flat budgets have already created to call for a wholesale elimination of the National Weather Service. It's a classic self-fulfilling bit of bad government logic: Ignore the positive work an agency does, keep the agency's budget flat so that its capabilities do not keep up with the times, then cite the agency's reduced capabilities as justification to keep cutting it. We hope the devastation in Oklahoma City will serve as a reminder of why that's the wrong path. After all, the weather service's forecasting and warning systems currently in place all worked as well as possible this week, and yet we are reminded of how bad things can be even with ample warning to the public. At the same time, we should all remain painfully aware of how much worse things could be if the sequester and other budget cuts begin to damage our weather forecasting capabilities. It's time for Congress and the White House to solve this problem, and many more that are lurking when we, simply out of ideological differences, purposely decide to jeopardize our infrastructure. It's time to stop needlessly inviting unnecessary and tragic consequences to eventually befall our country. It's time to end the sequester.”

Democrats, lead by President Obama, hoped public opinion would be enough to sway Congress to act before the sequester took effect. The president and others of his party warned of the consequences of the rather mindless cuts that eventually kicked in on March 1. Republicans countered that, well, it's only an \$85 billion cut. It's not so bad. And the American people's reaction has mostly been: meh. The sequester cuts were designed to be so undesirable that they virtually guaranteed that Congress and the White House would come up with an alternate agreement. But the reality is that public pressure simply hasn't reached the point to bring government leaders back to the table to try to solve our nation's budget problems. During the past few years our country has experienced a record number of billion-dollar weather catastrophes – the most recent being Hurricane Sandy and this week's Oklahoma tornado.

At the same time, the National Weather Service remains a perennial target for budget cuts and already has nearly a 10 percent employment vacancy rate – and those realities may be damaging its long-term ability to warn the public about severe weather events. As the *Washington Post* reports: “The cash-strapped National Weather Service is facing increasing scrutiny over its inferior computer modeling power compared to international peers and is anticipating a likely gap in weather satellite coverage. Last week, the Government Accountability Office ranked the pending satellite gap among the top 30 threats facing the federal government. The Department of Commerce warned that not only will the loss of satellite data and imagery diminish the quality of forecasts, but so will other important weather data surrendered by spending cuts.”

The above sounds like, well, government babble that the public easily dismisses. It's difficult for the private sector to sympathize with hardships that may befall a government agency. Our immediate reaction is to simply state, “We've had to deal with cuts in our personal budgets for years now. Time for you to deal with cuts, too.”

Dismissing government warnings of the effects of



All things wise in gardening

“What a [person] needs in gardening is a cast-iron back with a hinge in it.” C.D. Warner

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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When my little sister recounted her rescue of baby rabbits after her black and white Springer Spaniel, Hershey, hunted them in the myrtle patch behind her house, I suggested an old remedy.

Try placing mothballs around the myrtle and see if that keeps both the rabbits and Hershey out,” I suggested, not recalling when or where this solution was planted in the dark and dusty confines of my “fix-it” memory bank.

Curious as to other surefire garden tips to keep animals, bugs and birds away from our plantings; I did some digging and found a whole crop of tips for indoor and outdoor green thumbs, including these:

Water houseplants with flat soda pop or leftover cooled water from boiled eggs. Support indoor plants with inexpensive adjustable curtain rods, which expand as plants grow.

Every few days, move houseplants a quarter-turn to keep them growing straight. To prevent lime deposits, oil saucers and plates under potted plants.

Water inside hanging plants with a few ice cubes, which melt slowly and don't drip. To keep plants watered while you're away for a week, put a cotton cord in a container of water and the container a little higher than the plant. Or, place a

plastic bag over the plants after watering. Another tip is filling the bathtub with a little water, place pots on layers of newspaper or bricks on the bottom of the tub.

Clay pots are better for root systems than synthetic pots. Keep soil from splashing out of pots when watering by covering topsoil with a half-inch of pea-gravel.

To keep plants moist by slowing down the drainage and drying process and keep soil inside pots, cut old kitchen sponges into one-inch squares and place them over the drain at the bottom of flower pots.

For garden trash and weeds, wear an apron with big pockets or pin a bag to your belt. Keep plants from falling off porches and railings by hammering a wide-head nail into the wood and placing the pot's drain hole over the nail. And please refrain from spitting out your chewing gum in the garden or anywhere outside, for that matter. When birds ingest gum, they die.

For even rows and no seed waste, dump seeds into a backing pan and dip a wet string into the pan of seeds. Pick up

the seeds evenly with the moist string and then plant the string.

To mark your straight garden rows, jot down the planting date on empty seed packets, insert the packets upside down into clear soda pop bottles and stick the bottle necks in the ground.

Mark the garden hoe handle every six inches for a handy ruler for spacing plants. Plant sunflower seeds, nasturtiums and marigolds to attract birds away from the vegetable garden. Fill a pail with oiled sand to protect your small garden tools from rusting.

Plant garlic and onion sets in beds to help keep aphids away. Sprinkle red pepper liberally or push a few mothballs in the dirt around the garden to prevent animals from snacking on your veggies.

Gophers are discouraged from ruining gardens, when daffodil and narcissus bulbs are present.

Try an apple corer to transplant and weed tiny plants. Use ashes from a wood fires and tea leaves to fertilize your garden. Tea leaves keep insect away. Used coffee grounds are good for geraniums.

While you're planting, attract humming birds by growing morning glory, trumpet vine thistle or columbine. Happy, happy gardening!

Source: “All Things Wise and Wonderful,” Pasadena Art Alliance, 1975.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The real reason Madison was named contest-winner

To the editor:
After Madison (Grimm's) reinstatement as the Junior Duck Stamp winner, there has been some mischaracterization as to the reasons why she was reinstated.

I want to be very clear, the reason they reinstated Madison is because they were entirely in the wrong and I had more than enough evidence to prove it.

When the duck stamp office called us for the first and only time (late Friday afternoon, one week after the judging) to inform us of their decision to disqualify Madison, they completely brushed off my attempts to correct their misinterpretation of the contest rules.

There was no confusion. Madison followed all of the contest rules and legitimately won. Let me say that again, the contest rules are fine. They are not confusing so long as you don't have an issue with the English language or a comprehension problem.

Upon realizing their misinterpretation of their own rules, the duck stamp office twisted it to say that Madison violated the “spirit of the rules.” This was apparently their attempt to disregard the actual rules and interpret the meaning to be whatever fit their current desires.

Following our notification, they immediately sent out a national press release announcing the disqualification. The duck stamp office's incompetent actions forced us to take a stand. Failure to do so would have allowed their false accusations to tarnish not just Madison's, but many artists' reputations. Their actions resulted in character

defamation of many artists by wrongfully labeling a normal part of the artistic process as invalid. The fallout from their actions would cause irreversible damage to both contests.

I informed Dan Ashe (director of the USFWS) that if they didn't fix this quickly, I would fix it myself by releasing all of the evidence, publicly humiliating them, and taking legal action.

The duck stamp office sought to cover up their numerous culpabilities with a dishonest press release. Their faults being calculated, malicious, and discriminatory, I'm not surprised they would seek to keep it from being known.

We care about the program, but we care more about truth and justice.
Adam Grimm
Burbank

Thank you, Vermillion

To the editor:
I want to thank the community of Vermillion for their kindness to me over the last four and a half years as news director of Classic Hits 1063 and ESPN Radio 1570. I am moving to Billings, MT to be with my wife and pursue some new career opportunities.

I want to thank my family and my children, Brittany, Miranda, and Brianna for their love and support. To everyone I've worked with, you have made me a better person. To all the city, county, and school employees I've interviewed or games I've done, I will never forget the great time I've had. Go Tanagers and Yotes!
Robert Pfund

LETTER TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The *Plain Talk* encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the *Plain Talk* will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters to the Editor, 201 W. Cherry St., Vermillion, SD 57069, drop off at 201 W. Cherry in Vermillion, fax to 624-4696 or e-mail to david.lias@plaintalk.net.

PLAIN TALK POLL RESULTS

This week, Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton signed a bill that makes it possible for same-sex couples to get married in his state. Should South Dakota consider similar legislation?

Yes	53
No	45
Undecided	3
Total Votes	88

To participate in the Plain Talk's weekly poll, log on to plaintalk.net.

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