

What to do in the New Year

By JIM HUCKABAY Contributing Columnist

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Sometimes we think about the coming year endlessly. Sometimes we wake up suddenly to find it perched in our lap with some undefined expectations. Ready or not, 2015 is now in our lap.

This column probably calls for a rendition of "Auld Lang Syne," or something. The first time we met on the pages of the Daily Record was 17 years ago this week. Seventeen years? Jacques Jesaistout (we call him "Toot") — a founding member of the Reecer Creek Rod, Gun, Working Dog & Outdoor Think Tank Benevolent Association and human thorn, would observe, here, that "Time is always fun when you're having flies."

Be that as it may, we stand at the threshold of a new and potentially momentous year. What will it be this time? Which action will make this 2015 one for the books — one to shape your life as you would have it shaped? High in my mind is always a question about how my fishing or hunting or outdoor interests (and what I might do with them) will make the world a better place for those coming up behind us.

Several of us will start with a fresh attempt to get our Washington Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights resolution actually passed by our 2015 state Legislature. We made some progress last year, but the process needed more voices. Maybe we have enough, now, to move it forward with the help of Senator-elect Warnick and her Legislative assistant Kyle Lynch.

You recall that homey Jerry Pettit and I started a conversation about firearms a couple years back, and not long after that, we began discussing ideas about our state's outdoor bill of rights for our children; our future.

We have taken many cues from our own families. In my case, my Grand-Hucklings are being mentored by Hucklings with extensive experience with firearms and the outdoors, and an abiding interest in their children's outdoor connections. Over the past year and more, conversations with various combinations of them about my hope for our statewide Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, and the safety and skills training which might accompany it, were sprinkled with a fair amount of discussion of age-appropriate training and outdoor opportunities.

I have written about this stuff and I have spoken widely about this stuff. The bottom line is that more and more kids are learning to live without an earth connection, and that missed connection often shows up as a sort of generalized fear in their lives.

Thus, Jerry and I continue pursuing thoughts about firearms, a public conversation about the issues with which people across America are struggling, and the proper form for our proposed statement of kids' outdoor rights. Several others have joined in our arguments now as we craft a proposed resolution.

It still isn't quite in the form we want it to be, but the gist of it (following a fair number of "whereas," statements) is this: "The children of Washington have the right to discover and experience the outdoors through activities including the following: Create an outdoor adventure; Explore a trail; Camp under the stars; Go fishing; Discover nature; Explore Washington's heritage; Go on a picnic; Play in a park, in the water, in the snow, on the rocks; Go hunting; Learn to be safe around all the tools of outdoor recreation; Develop a respect for Washington's remarkable natural resources."

I am also pushing youngsters to take as many wildlife and outdoor photos as possible, and submit their best shots to the Central Washington Sportsmen Show Photo Contest. The contest is co-sponsored by the Kittitas County Field and Stream Club

and all photos will be on display during the Wenatchee, Tri-Cities and Yakima shows. Prizes include ribbons, canvas prints of winning photos and up to \$100 in gift cards. Details at www.shuylersproductions.com.

On a more personal level, I expect to wrap up a couple book projects in our Reecer Creek Publishing Company. We have an almost-here grandson for entertainment, and several already-here grandkids in need of training and hands-on experience with fishing, shooting and camping. Somehow, I have no doubt that 2015 will drop a surprise or two in our laps, as well. It will be a good year.

So, how does your year shape up? How will your love of nature and the outdoors help ensure and inspire forever outdoor connections for the people of Paradise?

Like fresh snow awaiting your tracks, this year lies undisturbed before you.

A happy and successful 2015 to you.

Jim Huckabay is retired from the Department of Geography at Central and is the author of "WILD WINDS and Other Tales of Growing Up in the Outdoor West," available online and at local bookstores. Contact Jim and join in the discussion of this and other columns at www.insidetheoutdoors.com.

Jim Huckabay