

# Water for Peace

Protecting a basic resource as a public trust

It may seem strange to link the words water and peace together, but in reality they are intimately linked. We live in a world in crisis. Not just some time in the future, but today. Water is an indicator of that crisis at every level – global, national and local. Global climate change, overuse and pollution, have made water a scarce resource. Control of water has become a source of conflict and a source of power.



At the recent Public Interest Environmental Law Conference, Vandana Shiva said that climate change manifests itself in water disruption. The melting of the Arctic ice cap and of glaciers around the world, the desertification of vast tracks in Sub-Saharan Africa and the southwestern U.S., and the acidification of the world's oceans that is killing coral reefs and disrupting ocean food chains, are clear indications she is right.

Over-use of water, based upon outdated models that privilege industrial agriculture and resource extraction, has led to the extraction of water from aquifers at rates which exceed their ability to replenish – causing massive water shortages.

Studies show that every major waterway and most lakes in the U.S. are polluted with mercury and that all fish in these waterways are contaminated. This is just one indicator of the pollutants dumped into our rivers and lakes that undermine the health of our ecosystem.

As water scarcity increases, extreme measures are taken that pit users against one another. One example is the proposal to raise the height of the Shasta Dam in northern California by 18 feet to store more water for use by industrial agriculture in the central California valley and for suburban Los Angeles. If this happens, the remaining sacred homelands of the Winnemem Wintu tribe will be submerged, striking a severe blow to their culture and history.

The Winnemem Wintu, which means middle water people, are also seeking to restore their sacred salmon to the Mcloud River. The Mcloud salmon were made extinct when the current Shasta Dam was created. Before this extinction occurred, salmon eggs from the Mcloud River were exported to New Zealand and thrived in the Rakaia River. The Maori tribes of New Zealand have re-gifted the salmon to the Winnemem and the salmon are being returned home. The challenge is to rehabilitate the ecosystem so that the salmon may live.

Perhaps the most serious threat to water is privatization. Locally, as *EW* reporter Camilla Mortensen has documented in her "Freshwater Fisticuffs" series, we have private water developers seeking to gain water rights to Willamette River water. Along the Columbia, Nestlé Group – a multinational corporation – is seeking to gain rights to put in a water bottling plant at Cascade Locks that would allow it to take water from Oxbow Springs. In other states where Nestlé has located, water tables have dropped as Nestlé turns local water into a bottled product sold globally. Communities lose control of their local water.

Water is necessary for all life and for the Earth's ecosystem. It seems obvious that water must be a human and ecosystem right, protected as a public trust for the benefit of all.

On Friday, April 15, the Lane Peace Center is holding its annual peace symposium on "Water for Life, Not for Profit." You are invited to attend. Information about the symposium is available at: [www.lanecce.edu/peacecenter](http://www.lanecce.edu/peacecenter) or by calling 463-5820.

*Stan Taylor is chair of the Lane Peace Center. He teaches peace studies and environmental politics at Lane Community College.*

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

### LANGUAGE IS A VIRUS

AN OCCASIONAL LOOK AT THE WAYS IN WHICH REALLY TERRIBLE IDEAS INFECT MAINSTREAM POLITICAL DISCOURSE

STEP ONE: REPUBLICAN POLITICIAN MAKES A MODEST PROPOSAL TO PAY FOR TAX CUTS FOR THE WEALTHY. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD EUTHANIZE THE ELDERLY--



--AND THEN PROCESS THEM INTO TASTY SNACK CRACKERS!

THE PROFITS FROM WHICH CAN BE USED TO FINANCE FURTHER TAX CUTS FOR THE WEALTHY.



STEP TWO: SERIOUS PEOPLE APPLAUD THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PLAN. IT'S EXTREMELY COURAGEOUS!

PROCESSING THE ELDERLY INTO SNACK CRACKERS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE THIRD RAIL OF AMERICAN POLITICS!



STEP THREE: LEFT-WING CRITICS ARE PORTRAYED AS NAIVE, UN-REALISTIC IDEOLOGUES.

IF THEY HAD THEIR WAY, GOVERNMENT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE CRADLE-TO-GRAVE PONIES AND RAINBOWS!



STEP FOUR: THE WINDOW OF ACCEPTABLE DEBATE IS SHIFTED EVER FURTHER TOWARD OUTRIGHT LUNACY.

PERHAPS WE COULD TAKE A MORE MODERATE APPROACH--AND SIMPLY ABANDON THE ELDERLY IN THE DESERT TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES!



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### TEMPORARY TAX

I have nothing but gratitude for my children's education in the Eugene 4J School District. I have experienced dedicated hardworking teachers from the elementary through the high school level. These teachers have been stretched to their capacity to make a difference in the lives of countless children both during and after school.

I am afraid that this might come to an end if we don't do something now. We have asked too much from our teachers already. We are at the bottom of the list on number of school days per year in this country, only beat by one other state. Class sizes are already too large for teachers to attend to students' independent needs.

I support the temporary tax for schools. This tax is intended to preserve school days and class sizes. Some have said that it is unfair that county residents will not have to pay. I urge all non-city residents to join me and many others in pledging to donate the equivalent (or more) to the Eugene Education Fund or the Bethel Education Fund. Our children and the future of this community need our help now.

*Gwen Gwilym  
Eugene*

### TAX US, PLEASE

Public education benefits us all — wherever we are in our lifespans, however little we participate directly in public schooling. Our children are grown. Others have no children. Others' children attend private school. So what? ALL children must learn to think and care for themselves, so they can sustain our shared spaces and public life when they all are grown.

We know that, as this tax is written, some who benefit won't pay as much — or pay at all. We also know that for a modest price (check your cost at the city's website under "Education Funding Update") those who will pay — ourselves among them — will get great value for our dollars. And we will get that value soon, and certainly, rather than maybe someday when, and if, the state reforms school funding.

We know money doesn't guarantee schools' success. We don't approve of

every school dollar spent; but we also know that too little money guarantees school failure. We know that every public budget is a compromise; and we know that public schools with too few dollars simply cannot do their hugely important job. That's both a terrible bargain and a true misuse of public funds.

So please, Eugene, don't waste our school dollars. Let's spend enough to spend them well. Please, raise our income taxes to support public schools!

*John Holtzaple  
Vicki Harkovitch  
Eugene*

### CLOSED-MINDED SLANT

I will be watching with interest to see if, and how, *EW* reports on the recent decision by Springfield officials not to expand the city's urban growth boundary. Call me cynical, but I half expect Alan Pittman to find a way put his usual closed-minded slant on the story.

Despite Pittman's assertions over the last couple of years that the only reason to separate Springfield's and Eugene's urban growth boundaries was to placate the "pro-sprawl" construction interests, it turns out that, after careful review, officials in Springfield have decided that enough land exists within the city's current boundary to meet residential needs for the next 20 years, so there's no need at present to expand the boundary. Imagine that! When Springfield is allowed to determine its own future, rather than being bound to its neighbor, the city can sometimes make good decisions!

I've occasionally complained in this letters column about what I consider *EW*'s one-sided tactics to promote its editorial point of view. It's not that I typically disagree with the paper's stance; on the contrary, as a fellow lefty I long to see intelligent arguments in favor of the positions I support. My problem is with the negative language too often employed by *EW*, and especially by Pittman, to make its point, as a cheap substitute for the well-reasoned, balanced arguments that would give the paper so much more credibility.

When Springfield asked the state

**COUPON**

**NOW 2 LOCATIONS! ★ SY'S NEW YORK PIZZA**

**55 SILVER LN. 654-0603**  
11AM-10PM DAILY

**1211 ALDER 686-9598**  
11AM-MIDNIGHT SUN-THU  
11AM-1AM FRI-SAT

COUPONS GOOD UNTIL APRIL 28TH, 2011

**\$2.00 OFF ANY 18" LARGE PIZZA**

**FREE LARGE SODA W/ PURCHASE OF 2 SLICES**

**COUPON**