

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



STEPHEN A. FORRESTER, *Editor & Publisher*

LAURA SELLERS, *Managing Editor*

BETTY SMITH, *Advertising Manager*

CARL EARL, *Systems Manager*

JOHN D. BRUIJN, *Production Manager*

DEBRA BLOOM, *Business Manager*

SAMANTHA MCLAREN, *Circulation Manager*

Gov. Brown sounds a trumpet

California governor declares water emergency

Timing is everything in politics. The same is true for moving public attitudes. Many have wondered when California would get serious about the severe drought. That moment arrived last Wednesday when Gov. Jerry Brown announced an executive order aimed at reducing the state's water usage by 25 percent.

To emphasize the dire circumstances, Gov. Brown made his announcement in a location in the Sierra Nevada above 7,000 feet. Instead of being covered by snowpack, the ground was bare. It was a vivid depiction of drought.

As we noted last Monday in an editorial about antiquated water law ("Now is the time for water rights reform"), the law across the West is a systemic impediment to smarter allocation of water resources. But setting that aside, there is a lot that a governor can accomplish.

The governor announced a rebate program to push replacement of older generation washing machines and other appliances. The state Water Resources Control Board has issued orders to curtail lawn watering, and the *Los Angeles Times* said that 50 percent of Los Angeles water goes onto lawns.

Too much of Los Angeles' scant rainfall goes into the ocean. There are new planning guidelines in place that will feed the aquifer underneath L.A.

California was a desert when it was settled. Massive water projects fueled Los Angeles' growth. That kind of aqueduct building is of another era. There was also an era when Pacific Northwest senators added amendments to prohibit the study of transferring water out of the Columbia River. Today that notion especially does not add up. The watershed that feeds the Columbia River also has a record low snowpack.

Instead of looking at massive projects, the Western states should be looking at the broad array of conservation known to hydrologists — including how computer sensors can make water delivery in urban settings and to agriculture much more efficient.

Little oil spills add up

Deal with them appropriately

An Exxon Valdez oil spill every year, but spread around in patches and streaks all over the U.S. — this is what a never-ending pattern of small spills and leaks adds up to. The consequences are significant and it's worth everyone's attention to avoid these problems.

A story by Seattle's KUOW last month outlined the scope of the 95 percent of U.S. oil spills that are comparatively small — less than a single highway tanker truck delivery; some much less. Together, they add up to hundreds of spills in Oregon and Washington each year from a wide variety of sources. Though certainly lacking the drama to attract anything more than local media attention, and often not even that, these spills kill untold numbers of plants, birds and other aquatic creatures, while generally degrading the quality of the environment. Nationwide, they cost nearly \$3 billion a year to clean up.

KUOW focused on a spill of 2,000 to 3,000 gallons that was traced 24 miles to a failing feedlot storage tank. Up to 50 people worked 11 days to mop it up. It doesn't take much to cause problems: It's been calculated that a tank leaking a drop every 10 seconds could release 60 gallons in a year.

Many of these spills are the legacy of earlier years in the petroleum era that began around 120-plus years ago. Petroleum products can continue doing damage for thousands of years. Improved awareness and stronger regulations have made steady progress in mitigating these ticking environmental bombs, but many remain.

In our area, some of these sources include:

- Spills and inappropriate disposal of oil and fuel products associated with World War II defense activities.

- Abandoned and forgotten underground storage tanks and fuel lines installed to service maritime, highway, aviation, forestry and agricultural vehicles and vessels.

- Tar tanks used to treat pound nets.

- Fuel and lubricants in sunken vessels.

- Tanks used to store home heating oil.

Rumors sometimes surface of storage tanks unearthed during construction activities and then quietly reburied. In other cases, environmental testing has disclosed the presence of oil spreading in groundwater from old spills and sumps, rendering property close to worthless.

In nearly every case, it makes both financial and ethical sense to avoid these issues in the first place and to confront them head-on when they come to our attention. Expensive as it may be to effectively deal with an obsolete or abandoned storage container, it is far more expensive to clean oil up after it has spread through surrounding soil and water.

Clearly, the best approach is make sure tanks and lines don't leak in the first place. If you no longer need them, get rid of them in an appropriate manner — contact Oregon DEQ for guidance. And if you find an abandoned tank or other source of potential pollution, report it.



In near freezing weather, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt stop to admire the Great Falls in Yellowstone Canyon, Yellowstone Park in Wyoming, Sept. 26, 1937.

Our land, up for grabs

By WILL ROGERS
New York Times column

SAN FRANCISCO — A Seattle is looming over America's public lands.

It's difficult to understand why, given decades of consistent, strong support from voters of both parties for protecting land, water and the thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic benefits these resources make possible.

Recently, the United States Senate voted 51-49 to support an amendment to a nonbinding budget resolution to sell or give away all federal lands other than the national parks and monuments.

If the measure is ever implemented, hundreds of millions of acres of national forests, rangelands, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas and historic sites will revert to the states or local governments or be auctioned off. These lands constitute much of what's left of the nation's natural and historical heritage.

This was bad enough. But it followed a 228-119 vote in the House of Representatives approving another nonbinding resolution that said "the federal estate is far too large" and voiced support for reducing it and "giving states and localities more control over the resources within their boundaries." Doing so, the resolution added, "will lead to increased resource production and allow states and localities to take advantage of the benefits of increased economic activity."

The measures, supported only by the Republicans who control both houses, were symbolic. But they laid down a marker that America's public lands, long held in trust by the government for its people, may soon be up for grabs.

We'll get a better sense of Congress' commitment to conservation this year when it decides whether to reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund, created in 1965 and financed by fees paid by oil companies for offshore drilling. The program underwrites state and local park and recreation projects, conservation easements for ranches and farms, plus national parks, forests and wildlife refuges.

Open forum

No vista of bridge

Those who enjoyed vistas of the Astoria Bridge as they walk along the Riverwalk west of Second Street need to be concerned about what is before the Astoria Planning Commission at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday. They say they are going to vote on the Bridge Vista Plan, but in reality, they will be voting on the Block the Bridge Vista Plan.

The area over the water in front of Stephanie's Cabin will allow a series of 35-foot-tall buildings. This will not only block the vistas of the bridge from Stephanie's Cabin, but also of those looking out the win-

Nearly \$17 billion has gone to those purposes over the years, including 41,000 state and local park and recreation projects, some of which my organization has helped put together. (Another \$19 billion was diverted by Congress to other purposes.) The program expires Sept. 30 unless Congress keeps it alive.

Land protection has long been an issue for which voters of both parties have found common cause. Since 1988, some \$71.7 billion has been authorized to conserve land in more than 1,800 state and local elections in 43 states. Last year, \$13.2 billion was approved by voters in 35 initiatives around the country — the most in a single year in the 27 years my organization has tracked these initiatives and, in some cases, led them.

But this consensus is being ignored, and not just in the nation's capital.

It is difficult to understand the hostility of elected officials, given the historical, bipartisan commitment to protecting our land and heritage.

In November, for instance, 4.2 million Florida voters approved a state constitutional amendment to provide \$22 billion over the next 20 years for land and water protection. But some legislative leaders want to use the money mostly for programs other than the land protections voters expected.

New Jersey voters also approved a constitutional amendment in November to dedicate corporate business tax revenue to preserve open space, farmland and historic places in the



Will Rogers

nation's most densely populated state. Again, support was lopsided, with 65 percent of voters in favor. But Gov. Chris Christie, a Republican, is now proposing to divert a quarter of the funds to purposes other than land acquisition and preservation.

And in Maine, money approved by voters for a popular state program called Land for Maine's Future is now caught up in a political tussle. The program was founded in 1987 to conserve land and has protected 560,000 acres. It has enjoyed wide support; in 2012, new bond financing was approved by 60 percent of voters casting a ballot. But Gov. Paul R. LePage, a Republican, is refusing to spend about \$11 million unless his plan to increase timber harvesting on state-owned lands is approved.

What's often lost in these debates is that these public lands provide enormous economic benefits.

In 2013, the country's national parks, wildlife refuges, monuments and other public lands had an estimated 407 million visits, which contributed \$41 billion to the economy and helped to support 355,000 jobs, according to a report by the Department of the Interior last year.

It is difficult to understand the hostility of some elected officials these days to public lands, given the historical, bipartisan commitment to protecting our land and heritage. This summer, millions of Americans will get outdoors and enjoy these wise investments.

The writer Wallace Stegner saw "geographies of hope" in our remaining wild places, and wrote that visiting them is "good for us when we are young, because of the incomparable sanity it can bring, as vacation, and rest, into our insane lives." And, he added, "It is important to us when we are old because it is there — important, that is, simply as an idea."

Rather than selling off the lands we all own, or looking for other uses for the money approved at the ballot box for conservation, our leaders should listen to voters and find ways to protect more of the places that make America special.

Will Rogers is the president of the Trust for Public Land.

dows of the Ship Inn restaurant.

They will require some space between the buildings, but that will only allow views north to the state of Washington, and not vistas of the bridge. Those strolling along the Riverwalk, or viewing from the trolley, will mainly see buildings at full implementation of this short-sighted vision for this stretch of the Columbia River, and not vistas of the bridge.

Please attend Tuesday's 6:30 p.m. Planning Commission meeting to let them know that the 35-foot buildings they are proposing over the river will probably cost our city as many jobs

as they create. They will definitely destroy something very special about our city that is currently available for all to enjoy, and which attracts many people to our area.

The Planning Commission could restrict the height of water-related uses over the river to less than few feet above the river bank, which would allow use of that area and preserve vistas of the bridge, but they need to hear from you. Buildings, like the Holiday Inn Express, need to be restricted to the south side of the trolley tracks.

GEORGE (MICK) HAGUE
Astoria

Where to write

- **U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D):** 2338 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C., 20515. Phone: 202-225-0855. Fax 202-225-9497. District office: 12725 SW Millikan Way, Suite 220, Beaverton, OR 97005. Phone: 503-326-2901. Fax 503-326-5066. Web: bonamici.house.gov/
- **U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D):**

313 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-3753. Web: www.merkley.senate.gov

- **State Rep. Brad Witt (D):** State Capitol, 900 Court Street N.E., H-373, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1431. Web: www.leg.state.or.us/witt/ Email: rep.bradwitt@

state.or.us

- **State Rep. Deborah Boone (D):** 900 Court St. N.E., H-481, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1432. Email: rep.deborah.boone@state.or.us District office: P.O. Box 928, Cannon Beach, OR 97110. Phone: 503-986-1432. Web: www.leg.state.or.us/boone/