

Dam road: Water district believes the structure is a liability

Continued from Page 1A

The City Commission voted in May against renewing a \$1.2 million agreement with the water district and the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce that would have provided the city with a single-lane bridge over the Skipanon River to ensure emergency access once the dam is removed. The commission had twice voted for the deal in the past, but reversed course under pressure.

The Nygaard family, who own Warrenton Fiber, and

Mayor Mark Kujala's family, who own property near the dam, do not want the dam removed because of flooding concerns.

The water district and CREST, however, have moved forward without the city. The water district's board voted Monday to give Tessa Scheller, the board's chairwoman, permission to sign a memorandum of understanding with CREST on a \$1 million project to remove the dam and improve fish passage and water quality. The task force will use federal

Bonneville Power Administration money to fund the project, which could be completed by the end of 2018.

The water district has removed the tide gates on the dam, but three narrow culverts that restrict the flow of water and fish remain in place.

The dam removal project will require a city permit, which could provide a forum for property owners and others who want to save the dam to raise objections. Legal challenges are also possible.

The water district believes

the dam — built by the federal government in 1963 and turned over to the district after exceeding a 50-year life span — is a legal liability.

An engineering plan adopted by the water district describes the structure as unsafe and largely useless for flood control.

"I think that, if it ever hits the courts, we're going to be the ones that are being looked at as being responsible owners of the structure, because we're trying to protect the public," Francis said. "Now, we tried to pro-

tect the public and give the city access by giving it a 16-foot-wide bridge. They have not agreed to that. So this is where you end up: You either get something, or you get nothing."

An examiner working for the water district's insurer determined that the structure is a liability.

"Someone could go into the river with a truck, or a car, or a piece of machinery ... and I'm afraid we would be liable," Scheller said.

Although the water district installed a sign indicating that

only authorized vehicles may use the road, the safety measure has not stopped commercial traffic, which the dam is not designed to support.

The aging structure, according to some, has also caused flooding problems.

"The biggest problem with the dam there now, from my point of view, is that it increases flooding on Dolphin Road and Perkins Lane when there is heavy downpours and heavy drainage coming down along the Skipanon," Chuck Switzer, a board member, said.



AP Photo/Winslow Townson

Members of the "End Zone Militia" watch fighter jets flyover Gillette Stadium before a New England Patriots NFL football game against the Buffalo Bills in Foxborough, Mass., in 2009. Michael Waldman, author of "The Second Amendment: A Biography," says when James Madison first proposed the right to bear arms, it was specifically seen as a right for gun ownership in the service of militias, which were seen as a bulwark against the possible tyranny and risk of overreach from a central government. That rationale for gun ownership still exists among many today.

Guns: Debate is one of the more toxic in US

Continued from Page 1A

interpretation of the law have shifted so much that outright gun bans are unthinkable. It's true that large segments of the public have expressed support for some aspects of gun regulation — but when Americans have been asked to say which is more important, gun control or gun rights, they trend toward the latter.

Fewer at home

That shift has come, perhaps surprisingly, as fewer Americans today choose to keep a gun in their home. The General Social Survey, a massive study undertaken by NORC at the University of Chicago since 1972 and one of the foremost authorities on gun ownership, found 31 percent of households had guns in 2014. That was down from a high of 50.4 percent in 1977.

"Institutions have repeated, 'More guns, less crime. More guns, less crime,' over and over again for almost 40 years, and it's hard to turn that belief around in any easy way," said Joan Burbick, an emeritus professor at Washington State University who wrote "Gun Show Nation: Gun Culture and American Democracy" and who owns a gun for hobby shooting.

Among the longest-existing measures of public gun sentiment is a Gallup poll question asking whether there should be a law banning handguns except by police and other authorized people. When it was first asked, in July 1959, 60 percent of

respondents approved of such a measure.

By last October, only 27 percent agreed.

The NRA

Many point to a single date as crucial in the societal shift: May 21, 1977, when the National Rifle Association held its annual meeting at a convention hall in Cincinnati.

"That was the moment, in one evening, when the gun debate in America radically changed," said Winkler.

The turmoil of the country in the 1960s and 1970s roiled institutions of all kinds, the NRA included. The organization had fought gun laws in the past, but also had come to accept some, including the Gun Control Act of 1968. As the next decade wore on and the NRA entered its second century, it faced an identity crisis: Was it a coalition of sportsmen, or a political powerhouse?

Leaders were set on the former, drawing up plans to move its headquarters from Washington to Colorado and to retreat from politics. Some of its most fiery members disagreed, staging a revolt that night that stretched into the next morning, and remade the group's leadership. Plans for a westward move were scuttled, and a rightward move politically was sealed.

The gun lobby's increasingly powerful voice found receptive ears among a public that witnessed the country's civil rights battles, assassinations of beloved leaders and grow-

ing lawlessness in cities. Over time, statehouses and Congress bowed to the influence of the NRA and its allies. And in 2008, the U.S. Supreme Court finally declared Americans have the right to a gun for self-defense.

"What they (gun rights advocates) did is a classic example of how you make constitutional change: They realized they needed to win in the court of public opinion before you could win in the court of law," said Michael Waldman, president of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University and author of "The Second Amendment: A Biography."

Gun owners today

Pew Research Center data provides a sketch of what the gun-owning populace looks like today:

- 74 percent of gun owners are men and 82 percent are white.
- Those in rural areas are more than twice as likely as urbanites to own a gun.
- Ownership rates in the Northeast are lower than in the rest of the country.
- Gun owners are far more likely to identify with or lean toward the Republican Party.

Data from GSS shows gun owners are more likely to have higher incomes — and to vote.

Taken together, this is a description of a motivated and politically potent group. But their clout sometimes obscures a simple fact: Though polarization appears in broad questions on gun rights, far more consensus emerges on individual proposals.

Many Americans agree

A Pew poll released in August showed 85 percent of people support background checks for purchases at gun shows and in private sales; 79 percent support laws to prevent the mentally ill from buying guns; 70 percent approve of a federal database to track gun sales; and 57 percent favor a ban on assault weapons.

"The fact is it's not divisive. The things that we're advocating in the American public, when you're talking about keeping guns out of dangerous hands, we all agree. We all agree on the solutions," said Dan Gross, president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, and whose brother was severely hurt in a shooting. "The only place where this is truly a controversial issue is, tragically and disgracefully, in Congress and in our statehouses across the country."

In the wake of the Orlando shooting that claimed 49 lives, Democrats mounted a 15-hour filibuster in the U.S. Senate to try to break a stalemate on a gun bill — just as attempts to revive legislation have followed other recent mass shootings, though with little effect. Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, a moderate Republican, likened it to "Groundhog Day," while Sen. Bill Nelson, a Democrat from Florida, said he couldn't see how even the NRA could object to a bill such as the one being considered, to keep those on a terrorist watch list from purchasing guns.

Gun ownership drops in US, but support for gun rights grows

By LARRY FENN and ANGELIKI KASTANIS
Associated Press

A look at gun ownership and attitudes about gun control in the United States:

- Gun ownership has decreased among all age, race and gender groups since 1973. At its peak in that time frame, in 1977, 50.4 percent of households had guns. By 2014, just 31 percent of households did.

- The drop was most pronounced among younger Americans. Among 18- to 25-year-olds, the ownership rate fell from 45 percent to 13 percent.

- Black gun ownership has dropped 75 percent since 1973; white gun ownership has decreased 48 percent.

- In 2014, about one-fourth of whites, 26 percent, owned a gun. Among blacks, the rate was 10 percent.

- Gun owners are more likely to vote. In 2004, 31 percent of gun owners said they voted, versus 17 percent of those without guns. In 2008, 23 percent of gun owners reported voting, compared with 17 percent of non-gun owners. In 2012, it was 25 percent versus 19 percent.

- When asked which is more important, gun control or protecting gun rights, big gains have been recorded in those choosing gun rights, particularly in the past 15 years, leaving Americans nearly evenly split. Those favoring gun rights • 29 percent of the population in 2000 • grew to 47 percent by last year. Those saying gun control is more important declined from 57 percent to 50 percent in the same period.

- Though a big gap still exists between blacks and whites, both groups have moved to valuing gun rights over gun control. In 1999, 17 percent of blacks favored gun rights over gun control, compared with 34 percent in 2014. Whites went from 32 percent to 61 percent.

- Republicans have moved far more swiftly than Democrats toward favoring gun rights over gun control. In 1999, 42 percent of Republicans said gun rights were more important, versus 76 percent in 2014. Among Democrats, the increase was much smaller, from 19 percent to 28 percent.

Source: Pew Research Center; General Social Survey by NORC at the University of Chicago

There is little expectation that the Democratic bill will pass. "They are accustomed to getting their way around here," Nelson said of the NRA.

The NRA did not respond to an interview request.

Gross sees signs for hope for gun control supporters. Social media, he said, has helped get out a message that his side, for years, struggled to spread against the deep pockets of the gun lobby. The Democratic presidential primary, in which Hillary Clinton made gun control a flagship issue in differentiating herself from Bernie Sanders, showed it's not an untouchable political issue. And changing national demographics could further bolster the case of those who favor gun restrictions, because minorities are comprising a larger share of the populace and are less likely to own guns.

Toxic debate

Still, this debate remains one of the more toxic in America.

Winkler, the UCLA professor, knows divisiveness. He

worked on the defense teams of O.J. Simpson and Michael Jackson. His research has prompted impassioned debates on issues from free speech to campaign finance.

"Nothing has ever come close to the level of vitriol I have seen with guns," he said. "Both sides feel that life and death is at stake."

The fear expressed by many gun owners that the government seeks to confiscate their weapons harkens back to the time of the Constitution's framers. When James Madison first proposed the right to bear arms, Waldman said, it was specifically seen as a right for gun ownership in the service of militias, which were seen as a bulwark against the possible tyranny and risk of overreach from a central government. That rationale for gun ownership still exists among many today.

"People were worrying about overreach from Washington when it was George Washington and not Washington, D.C.," Waldman said.

Oregon Hunters Association

Clatsop County Chapter

7th Annual Youth Shoot Family Fun Day

Saturday, July 9th
Clatsop County Fairgrounds
8am-5pm

Youths 6-17 Years of Age
(Accompanied by their adult supervisor)

\$15 per Youth
(Mandatory adult supervisors attend free!!!)

Youth who sign up by July 3rd are entered into a drawing for a .22 rifle!

Shooting all types of guns, plus archery!

Pre-register by calling 503-359-3535 or 503-440-9934
or Register 8am at the event

BBQ lunch for everyone! Prizes for all youth!

WHEN THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS expect your ambulance costs to be covered. \$59 per year protects your family* from needless worry.

LifeCare ONLY \$59⁰⁰*

*Full year, per household. Family includes you and household dependents.

BECOME A MEMBER. IT'S EASY.

Open enrollment through June 30, 2016
Credit cards accepted.
Call us today 503-861-5558 or stop by our office
www.ambulancemembership.com/medix

2325 SE DOLPHIN AVENUE
WARRENTON

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 9-1-1