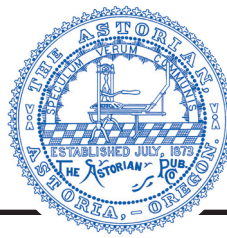


OPINION



the Astorian

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OUR VIEW

Why Oregon needs a water policy

Oregon desperately needs a coordinated, effective, results-oriented and clear water policy that the Legislature has approved and the governor supports.

Without it, irrigators, municipalities and other water users will have to fend for themselves.

But that's what they've had to do for decades.

Around the state, water issues have been all but ignored or addressed only on an ad-hoc basis.

In Klamath Falls, for example, water shortages have existed for decades, yet the state has been ineffective in its efforts to resolve them.

In dry central Oregon, the rapid population growth is straining the water supply, but the state is remarkably silent on how to address it.

Across the state, water supplies and quality are problems.

When irrigation districts do try to expand water storage, the state attaches strings that throw the effectiveness of the project into question.

Near Hood River, for example, the Farmers Irrigation District invested millions of its own dollars and dollars from the state to raise the Kingsley Dam to increase the amount of water stored behind it.

Only now the district's leaders worry that the state has attached environmental strings to the project funding that will mean more water can't be stored unless the stream flow is higher than regulators require.

The irrigators worry that stream flow requirement is unrealistically high, but the Oregon Water Resources Department disputes that.

Either way, the state will have helped fund water storage that potentially can't be used during the driest years, when it's needed most.

That may make sense to some-



The Kingsley Dam near Hood River.

Farmers Irrigation District

one, but to water users — and taxpayers — it only demonstrates how Oregon continues on a path toward ineptitude on water issues.

People, agriculture and, yes, even fish depend on Oregon policymakers to get it right, but time and again they come up with self-defeating regulations.

Even when the Legislature decides to help with water projects, its intentions are subverted. In 2013, it passed a water supply grant program. The idea was to help irrigators and others build more storage. But the rule-making was an "unmitigated disaster," said Jeff Stone, executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, adding that "rule-making is where good bills go to die because every-

one relitigates all they wanted in the first place."

Environmental groups say because public money is involved, water users should expect to meet higher standards.

That's an interesting thought, but the logic is missing. If the state's rules don't follow the legislation and instead make new storage unaffordable or unusable, they fail to accomplish what the Legislature wanted.

Fearing unrealistic regulations, some groups that need state help for water projects avoid the Water Resources Department.

Legislators see the shortcomings of the current situation.

Some lawmakers support "place-based" planning for water, allow-

ing communities to develop plans. Unfortunately, they don't have the authority to put those plans into effect, according to state Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, and vice chair of the House Water Committee.

Rep. Ken Helm, D-Beaverton, said the state needs a "water czar," whom the next governor should appoint. "We need leadership from the governor. There's no substitute for that," he said.

What Oregon needs, though, is leaders in the Legislature who recognize the critical importance of water statewide and will develop a statewide framework that helps communities implement water plans.

The state's role should be clear: to help, not get in the way.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Borrowed time

It would seem that Tourist No. 2 is living on borrowed time, sad to say. Has anyone considered, once all of the legalities are out of the way, placing her on a pedestal, similar to the Peacock by the Barbey Maritime Center, above the high-water mark at the old ferry slip? She'd be out of the water, and very much at home at that location.

While most of the population probably doesn't remember when Tourist No. 2 and her sisters were in service, she was definitely part of Astoria's maritime history, and deserves more than being cut up for scrap. Like so many other things, once she's gone there's no bringing her back.

BRUCE QUINN
Dallas, Oregon

Tone-deaf

I was appalled to see the Clatsop County Republican Party raffling off an AR-15 assault rifle at our county fair last week. How tone-deaf do you have to be, in this day and age, to raise a few dollars by giving away a military-grade weapon — its only purpose to destroy human life — at a community event, focused on our children and families?

In just the past few months, we've seen 19 children and two teachers shot to death in their classroom. Ten more killed in their neighborhood grocery store. And seven gunned down at a Fourth of July parade, attended by families celebrating the day in much the same spirit as those attending our county fair. Every single one of them was murdered, even coldly and innocently, with the same type of weapon given away thoughtlessly as a fundraiser for the Clatsop County Republican Party.

Go ahead and crow about your Second Amendment right to own a gun, but local Republicans should be ashamed of the



heartless display of ignorance and greed perpetrated in their names by their party leaders. We don't need these weapons of war in our community, and we most certainly don't need them hawked to our children and families at our county fair.

I call on all Republicans to loudly and unequivocally denounce their party's leadership for even considering this a valid gesture, and I ask our county leaders to immediately ban this type of deadly and immoral fundraising from any future county event.

JEFF DENNY
Astoria

LETTERS WELCOME

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