

Anti-Nestlé protestors decry state's role in proposed bottled water plant

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The Oregonian/OregonLive, staff
Editor's note: This AP story was originally published April 16 in The Oregonian.

Rush hour across the Hawthorne Bridge Thursday morning was an unusually rowdy affair.

Along with the motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians making their way toward Downtown Portland, about 150 demonstrators gathered at the bridge's eastern approach to decry the state's plan to let Nestlé bottle and sell water from a Columbia River Gorge spring.

The protestors stood, waving "No to Nestlé" signs and chanting "Gov. Brown, don't let us down!" while passing commuters honked their horns in support, or breezed by without batting an eye.

The protest signals a backlash to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's decision last week to proceed with a plan to speed up the permitting process for a Nestlé bottled water plant in Cascade Locks while cutting public interest out of the equation.

The world's largest food and beverage company has been eyeing the 1,148-person town since 2008 as a prime site for its first

Northwest bottling plant. Nestlé has other spring water plants throughout the nation, including several in California.

Nestlé's plan in Cascade Locks hinges upon the state's cooperation. The fish and wildlife department owns water rights at Oxbow Springs, which Nestlé wants to tap for its Arrowhead spring water brand. Nestlé has a tentative agreement with the Cascade Locks city leadership to build a \$50 million bottling plant in the town, employing up to 50 people and nearly doubling the city's property tax revenue.

For the deal to work, the city must gain access to Oxbow Springs, and then sell the water to Nestlé as a municipal utility customer.

Initially, city and state leaders planned to accomplish that task by trading water gallon-for-gallon. The state would give Cascade Locks 0.5 cubic feet per second of spring water in exchange for an equal amount of city well water. Under that plan, state regulators tasked with approving or denying the trade have been required to consider the trade's impact on the public.

Trading water rights, however, requires no public interest review and is ex-

pected to take less time. Protestors at Thursday's demonstration argue the city and state's decision to pursue that route amounts to an attempt to silence opposition.

"The idea that they're going to sell the state's water is ridiculous," said Brook Kirklín, 52, of Portland. "It doesn't belong to them - it belongs to us."

Demonstrators' reasons for opposing the plant are myriad. Some argue Nestlé's plan in Cascade Locks amounts to privatization of a public resource. Others worry about the environmental impacts of all those plastic bottles and the fossil fuels needed to ship them to the store. Some simply scoff at the idea of selling water for hundreds of times the amount it costs to draw from the tap.

Recently, the company has come under intense scrutiny in California for failing to curb its water use despite a severe drought that has residents throughout the state scaling back. The U.S. Forest Service is also reviewing the company's practices in the San Bernardino National Forest, where it has continued to pump water even though its permit to transport it across the forest expired years ago.



Photo by Kelly House, The Oregonian/OregonLive, staff
ANTI-NESTLÉ PROTESTORS gathered in downtown Portland to protest the proposed bottled water plant in Cascade Locks.

Cascade Locks resident Kathy Tittle, who joined Thursday's demonstration, said she worries a Nestlé plant in Cascade Locks would cause the same problems in Oregon.

"I'm screaming from the rooftops that I don't want that here," Tittle said.

Nestlé supporters say a bottling plant would bring badly needed jobs to Cascade Locks, while capitalizing on a readily available resource.

What's next in the process? The Oregon Water Resources Department is in charge of approving or denying ODFW and Cascade Locks' applications. A 30-day public comment period is underway. After reviewing comments, the agency will issue a preliminary decision. Another month of public comment will follow before Water Resources makes a final call on the proposed water rights swap.

Invasive mussels found on boat at Ontario

ONTARIO, Ore. - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife technicians discovered Zebra mussels on a boat at the Ontario boat inspection station Friday. The boat being hauled from Lake Erie in Ohio is the first vessel of the 2015 inspection season found to be infested with the invasive mussels.

The commercial driver hauling the Ohio watercraft pulled in for inspection. Motorists hauling boats in Oregon are required to stop at inspection stations to have their watercraft checked for aquatic invasive species under a 2011 Oregon law. Failure to stop at an inspection station could result in a \$110 fine.

The boat had a moderate number of adult Zebra mussels around the propeller shaft and under the stern in the drain plug area. It was decontaminated at the inspection station with high-pressure and hot water.

"The driver did the right thing by pulling over to have the boat inspected. Boat owners need to always practice 'Clean, Drain, Dry' before launching their boat to keep invasive mussels and other aquatic invasive species out of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest," said Rick Boatner, ODFW Invasive Species Coordinator. "Zebra and Quagga mussels have caused billions in economic damage around the

U.S. and we don't want to have the same kinds of problems they create here in the Pacific Northwest."

According to the Columbia Basin Bulletin, the Pacific Northwest, including Alaska and the Canadian provinces of British Columbia and Alberta, is the "only place on the continent" unaffected by the Zebra and Quagga mussel invasions that have devastated ecosystems and local economies. The U.S. Geological Survey has a Quagga and Zebra mussel distribution map on its website. Their highest concentration is in the great lakes of North America.

The last time ODFW found invasive mussels at the Ontario station was May 20, 2014, when technicians discovered Quagga mussels on a pontoon houseboat.

In addition to Quagga and Zebra mussels, inspectors are looking for aquatic plants and New Zealand mudsnails.

"Clean, Drain, Dry," ODFW's boat cleaning guidelines.

Clean the boat completely, pulling off any plant material, animals or mud.

Drain - completely drain any areas that could hold standing water by pulling all drain plugs.

Dry - allow the boat to dry before launching again.



Photo by ODFW

INVASIVE ZEBRA MUSSELS were found in drain areas of an Ohio boat at the ODFW boat inspection station in Ontario Friday.

HOOD RIVER NEWS (ISSN 07465823) is published twice weekly, every Wednesday and Saturday. Subscription rates: \$42 per year prepaid (\$36 for senior citizens, 65 and over) in Hood River County and western Wasco County, Oregon; and Klickitat and Skamania counties, Washington. Elsewhere, \$68 prepaid per year. Known office of publication, 419 State Ave., Hood River, OR 97031-2031. Periodicals postage paid at Hood River, Oregon. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HOOD RIVER NEWS, P.O. Box 390, Hood River, OR 97031-0103.

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		3	4	1	9		
4				6			8
			6	7	2		
1	8	9					7
6			8	4			5

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