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## Brown lawn time: Outdoor water saving tips

By JORDAN KIM

**Y**ou don't need Hood River County's recent drought declaration to recognize that we're facing an unusually dry year. With the Hood River running at 39 percent of normal, a nearly non-existent snow pack, and temperatures over 100 degrees in June, everyone has water on their minds. We are all incredibly fortunate to live in an area where plentiful water has been a reliable resource. In the past, when we've used water thoughtlessly, or even excessively, we've rarely faced consequences. However, this year is different and we all need to do our part to conserve that precious resource.

For many, the water shortage will be an inconvenience. For others, it will affect their livelihood.

With water withdrawals steadily increasing, many parts of the Hood River watershed are experiencing extremely low stream flows. This can impair fish habitat and degrade water quality. Each of us can help keep more water in the Hood River and improve conditions for the farms, fish and wildlife that make use of this limited resource. For many of us, the simplest place to conserve water is in our landscapes. The following tips can help you increase your water efficiency and eliminate water waste.

■ Do you have a water right? If so, make sure you know what it is stay within your right. If you do not have a water right, check with your domestic water supplier to find out if outdoor watering is allowed.

■ Irrigate early in the day between 4 and 9 a.m., when evaporation is lowest. The next best time is after 8 p.m. at night. Avoid watering on windy days.

■ Water infrequently but deeply. This promotes growth of deep root systems so plants can withstand longer dry periods and stay healthy.

■ Regularly check for leaky or broken sprinklers, hoses, and water lines and fix them promptly.

■ Never apply water faster than it can be absorbed. Sloped areas are tricky to water effectively. Contour around each plant to create a water well, or use terracing.

■ For new landscapes, choose native, drought-tolerant plants or eco-lawns for future water savings and less maintenance.

■ Consider letting your lawn go dormant in summer. It will green up again in the fall. (The Hood River Watershed Group is offering "Dormant Lawns for Farms and Fish" signs for those who volunteer to let their lawns go dormant this summer. Details on page A1.)

■ Use drip irrigation or micro-sprinklers instead of overhead or impact sprinklers. You'll save water and minimize plant diseases caused by wetting the foliage of your plants.

■ Redirect sprinklers to avoid hitting the pavement. Watering pavement is a true waste.

■ Remove weeds regularly and use a weed barrier such as mulch material, bark, or landscape fabric. Weeds compete with desirable plants for water.

■ Mulch your plants. Mulches help conserve moisture while suppressing weeds.

■ Dig composted materials such as yard trimmings, manure, and leaves into your soil to increase water retention and nutrients.

Please join the effort to keep our creeks, rivers and streams healthy. Technical help, advice and cost assistance is available. For more information, please contact your Hood River Soil & Water Conservation District at 541-386-4588 or info@hoodriverwcd.org.

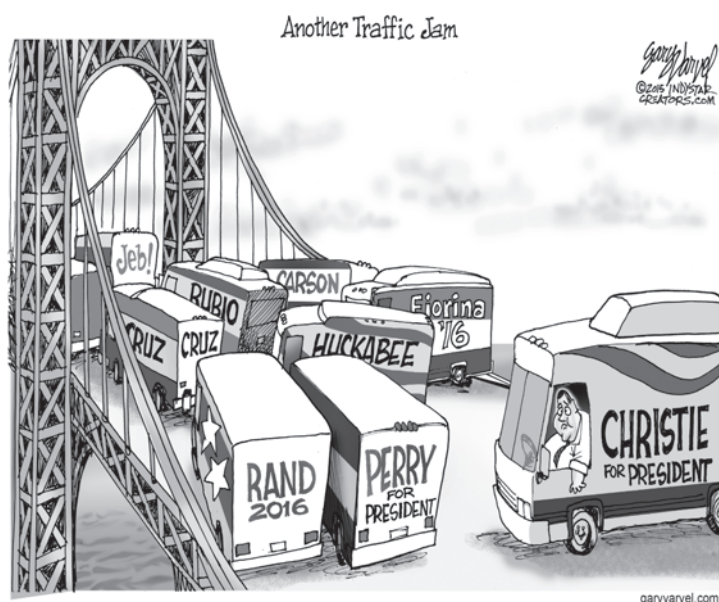
Jordan Kim, assistant manager of Hood River Soil and Water Conservation District, wrote this as a summary of a presentation made last month to farmers and homeowners.

## WHERE TO E-MAIL

For letters to the editor, guest columns, news items and press releases, the e-mail address is:

HRNews@hoodrivernews.com

For e-mail letters to the editor, please include your name, address and daytime telephone number.



## The kids are our bounty

Hood River County has bounty. It was fitting that the 4th of July parade honored FISH volunteers, who generously distribute some of that bounty, as grand marshals.

Every parade needs a band and what a joy it was to see the large "The Beat Goes On" marching band and baton twirlers. Our parade is something to be proud of. Thanks to all who made this Independence Day parade celebration a success.

Especially fitting was the reminder from our Lord that our children are "Our Most Beautiful Bounty" as displayed by Immanuel Lutheran Church's beautiful float. Children were prominent participants in the parade, as they should be.

David Bohlmann  
Hood River

## A truck and water solution

In response to Peter Frothingham's "Another Voice" article (July 4), I would like to point out that there is a solution to the Nestlé truck issue, and it is a rather simple one. It does, however, require our City Council to both stand up to Nestlé, and to hone their negotiating skills.

The solution is to designate the I-84 interchange at Wyeth (exit 51) as the only access to the plant for trucks coming from the west, as well as for those returning to the west. Trucks coming from the east and/or returning to the east can use exit 47.

Yes, Nestlé will argue that the extra 10 or 11 miles will cost them money, and they would be right, of course. However, their argument falls apart when one considers that

the bottled water in the Northwest is presently being trucked in from either Hope, BC, or any of their various plants in California.

Exit 51 will not cost Nestlé money, it will save them millions of dollars a year in transportation costs that they are now spending.

Mr. Frothingham is also of the opinion that the watershed is too small to sustain the aquifer once Nestlé starts drawing water for the bottling plant. According to the hydrology report of 2009, there are actually three sources of water that recharge the aquifer from which the city wells draw their water.

Together, these sources supply more than two trillion gallons of water per year. Turns out that the seepage loss from Herman Creek is actually the primary source of water for the city wells, not precipitation falling on the watershed area.

Clearly there is ample water for both the people of Cascade Locks and Nestlé.

Plenty of water and no trucks in town — so what's the problem?

Gary Munkhoff  
Cascade Locks

## We need the Antiquities Act

Of all the "7 Wonders of Oregon," the Columbia River Gorge is one of the most recognized.

The Columbia River Gorge showcases some of the best things about public lands — a huge river, big waterfalls, stunning vistas, pioneer history, and what I'm most excited about — great fishing.

The Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area also displays one of the best things about Americans — our commitment to public lands and access for all. Without committed citizens and forward-thinking policies, it would have been impossible to

keep the Gorge from being overwrought with development.

For example, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a program few have heard about but nearly everyone has been affected by. It protects parks and public lands big and small around the country. From local ball fields and city parks to Mount Hood and the Columbia Gorge, LWCF gets around.

LWCF uses no taxpayer money — only offshore gas royalty fees. This historic program expires in September, and we need Congress to reauthorize it in its current form if we're to continue investing in public lands, including places like the Gorge.

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Act was passed by the US Senate and House in October of 1986 and signed by President Ronald Reagan the following month. Unfortunately, not all locally driven initiatives to protect places and support local economies make it through Congress.

That's why we need tools like the Antiquities Act to remain intact. The Antiquities Act gives the President authority to establish national monuments to protect public lands for recreation, historic or cultural purposes. It has been used equally by presidents on both sides of the aisle. Here in Oregon, it was used by President Clinton to establish the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Antiquities Act are two historic tools that protect public lands and help our local economies.

We thank Senator Wyden for being a champion of public lands, because they are the bedrock of a \$10 billion dollar outdoor Oregon economy, according to Travel Oregon.

Brian Jennings,  
State Coordinator  
Backcountry Hunters  
and Anglers  
Bend



## ANOTHER VOICE

### Don't let Gorge become the next Lac Megantic

By PETER CORNELISON,  
KATE MCBRIDE, and  
LAURENT PICARD

**O**n July 6, 2013, a train carrying highly flammable oil from the Bakken region derailed and burned in the town of Lac-Megantic, Quebec, resulting in explosions so violent that several city blocks were flattened and 47 victims were incinerated, 5 of whom were never found.

Two years later, explosive Bakken oil is still being transported through our communities in unsafe rail cars at excessive speeds. As shipments of oil by rail have dramatically increased since 2006 due to the oil boom in the Bakken oil fields, so have oil train accidents. In 2013, more than 1.15 million gallons of oil spilled, a 50-fold increase over the yearly average between 1975 and 2012. Earlier this year, four oil trains derailed in a three-week period and burst into flames, spilling hundreds of thousands of gallons of oil, contaminating rivers and causing the evacuation of hundreds of people.

The average blast radius of these explosive train derailments is one-half mile due to the enormous amount of energy contained in each railroad tank car, which holds around 28,800 gallons of oil. Often trains are made up of over 100 rail cars, called unit trains, all

carrying oil.

The surge in rail transport of oil has outpaced regulatory oversight. New rules adopted by the U.S. Department of Transportation would allow some unsafe tank cars to stay in operation until 2025. A fundamentally flawed regulatory system and cost-cutting corporate behavior jeopardizes public safety and the environment. This level of irresponsibility extends to the highest levels of corporate management and government policy making.

Here, as a nearly sea level route through the Cascade Mountain range, almost all oil trains headed West travel through the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. An oil train explosion or spill here would be an unmitigated, enormous disaster.

Oil train fires are typically left to burn themselves out since they are so difficult to put out. With strong Gorge winds, this could cause an unstoppable wildfire fire burning downwind on both sides of the Gorge. If the explosion happened in one of our Gorge towns, with railroad tracks in the center of town, an entire community could be vaporized.

In the case of an oil spill, our strong winds and fast Columbia River current would make containing and mitigating the spill impossible. For example, one nightmare oil spill scenario visu-

alized by the Army Corp of Engineers would be a leak of Bakken crude oil near one of the Columbia River dams. The toxic high-end hydrocarbons in the oil would render all fish ladders unusable to the fish because of the hydrocarbon "smell" soaked into the concrete. This could end salmon runs as we know them, cost untold billions to tear out and replace the fish ladders and halt river traffic during reconstruction.

Given these huge risks, it is extremely irresponsible for the railroads, oil industry and federal government to permit these dangerous oil trains to travel through the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Please join us and the cities of Hood River (Council Resolution 2014-22), Stevenson and the Columbia River Gorge Commission, which have each drafted resolutions opposing crude oil by rail transport through the Columbia River National Scenic Area. The risks are simply too great!

Find out how you can get engaged by contacting Stand Up To Oil or Columbia Gorge Climate Action Network. We can stop the Gorge from becoming the next Lac Megantic.

Visit [www.standuptooil.org](http://www.standuptooil.org) or, locally, [www.CGCAN.org](http://www.CGCAN.org).

Peter Cornelison, Kate McBride and Laurent Picard are Hood River City Council Members.