

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Clean water shouldn't be taken for granted

Oregon is known for its pristine drinking water — so good that some corporations want to bottle it for sale. But a new threat has emerged: toxins produced by algae blooms.

State and local officials were caught off-guard in late May when cyanotoxins were discovered for the first time in treated drinking water in Oregon — Salem's water supply.

Officials were slow to alert the public, and their initial announcements created confusion. Residents were outraged, and rightly so.

Most people could drink the water without becoming ill, but the botched communications left them wondering how public officials would respond in the event of a true disaster, such as a devastating earthquake. Since then, the state and city of Salem have gotten their act together. To her credit, Gov. Kate Brown soon pushed the issue by declaring an emergency — an administrative action that allowed the Oregon National Guard to provide water and enabled other state agencies to help out.

Last week, the Oregon Health Authority issued temporary rules requiring as many as 200 water suppliers around the state to regularly test for cyanobacteria — harmful algae blooms — and alert the public when cyanotoxins are found.

"In an era of climate change that we're seeing, these kinds of things are likely to be more frequent, longer lasting, more

About cyanotoxins

Location: Since 2013, harmful algal blooms have been found at various times in Baker, Coos, Clackamas, Clatsop, Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Morrow and Multnomah counties. However, most Oregon lakes and rivers are not regularly monitored for cyanotoxins.

Appearance: Algal blooms generally appear as thick foam or scum on the water surface. They may resemble pea soup. They can be bright green, bluish-green, white or brownish-red.

Exposure: Cyanotoxins can be ingested, whether accidentally while swimming or by drinking the tainted water. Inhalation is a low risk. Cyanotoxins cannot be absorbed through the skin but can create a skin rash.

Health effects: Symptoms can include numbness, tingling and dizziness that can lead to difficulty breathing or heart problems and require immediate medical attention. Skin irritation, weakness, diarrhea, nausea, cramps and fainting should also receive medical attention if they persist or get worse.

Vulnerable people and pets: When cyanotoxins are present in recreational water, children and pets are at increased risk for exposure due to their small size and high level of activity. In drinking water, cyanotoxins create a greater risk to children under age 6, adults age 65 and older, people with compromised immune systems or liver conditions, pregnant or nursing mothers, people on dialysis and other medically fragile individuals, as well as pets.

Other facts: Typical camping or home-use water filters do not remove cyanotoxins. Boiling may increase their concentration.

Source: Oregon Health Authority

intense, and it's an emerging threat we need to respond to," OHA Director Patrick Allen said.

The rules took effect Sunday, July 1, and will last for the rest of the year while permanent regulations are written.

Too little research has been done on toxic algal blooms and their health effects on humans, but the OHA was smart to act.

As for our state's capital, Salem was ahead of the curve in testing for cyanotoxins. Few Oregon lakes and rivers are monitored routinely for the harmful algae blooms and resulting toxins, which can cause symptoms similar to food poisoning.

Still, the blooms have been found in 16 Oregon counties — including the Willow Creek Reservoir near Heppner — during the past five years.

Drinking water for Salem and several other communities comes from the South Santiam River. The river flows from Detroit Lake, a popular recreation area that has been under on-and-off health advisories for algal blooms this year.

The city of Salem finally ended its water advisory on July 3 and on July 4 began permanently treating its drinking water for cyanotoxins. For weeks, Salem had operated round-the-clock water distribution sites while installing and testing the treatment process.

Meanwhile, Douglas County recently issued a permanent health advisory about potential cyanotoxins in the South Umpqua River and Lawson Bar. Klamath County has as well.

Oregon's healthy, plentiful water has been in sharp contrast to much of the world. But we dare not take it for granted.

OTHER VIEWS

Donald Trump's mainstream immigration policy

Perhaps no Trump policy has provoked more emotional reaction than the practice of separating illegal border crossers from the children they brought with them to the United States. There's no need to recount the number of times critics have called the president a Nazi, or a fascist, or just plain cruel.

The administration has now stopped the separation policy. But it plans to continue prosecuting illegal border crossers and, when those crossers bring children illegally into the United States, will "detain families together during the pendency of immigration proceedings," according to an administration court filing in California.

That, of course, will not satisfy the critics, and legal challenges are sure to follow. But if a new poll is correct, it appears the Trump administration, after an enormously damaging few weeks, has ended up squarely on the side of the majority of American voters.

The new survey is a Harvard-Harris Poll, by former Clinton pollster and strategist Mark Penn. It was conducted in late June with 1,448 registered voters.

On the issue of separations, Penn began with a threshold question: "Do you think that people who make it across our border illegally should be allowed to stay in the country or sent home?" Sixty-four percent said they should be sent home. Thirty-six percent said they should be allowed to stay.

Then Penn asked: "Do you think that parents with children who make it across our border illegally should be allowed to stay in the country or sent home?" The presence of children made little difference in the result: 61 percent said they should be sent home, while 39 percent said they should be allowed to stay.

The vast majority — 88 percent — opposed separating illegal immigrant families while they are in the U.S., and they blamed the Trump administration for the policy. On the other hand, 55 percent said illegal immigrant families should be held in custody "until a judge reviews their case" — essentially the new Trump family detention policy.

Put the numbers together, and a substantial majority said illegal border crossers, and the children they brought, should be returned to their home countries. To that end, 80 percent favored hiring more immigration judges "to process people in custody faster."

"They (poll respondents) rejected family separation while narrowly favoring family detention," Penn said in an email



BYRON YORK
Comment

exchange. "Mostly they want people who cross the border illegally to be turned around and returned home efficiently."

Penn's polling found other results broadly favorable to the Trump approach to immigration.

For example, Penn asked, "Do you think we need stricter or looser enforcement of our immigration laws?" Seventy percent said stricter, while 30 percent said

looser.

Penn asked whether respondents "support or oppose building a combination of physical and electronic barriers across the U.S.-Mexico border." Sixty percent supported the barriers, while 40 percent did not. Sixty-one percent said current border security is inadequate.

Finally, Penn found widespread support for the fundamental provisions of the immigration bills, based on Trump's "four pillars," that were recently rejected by the House of Representatives. "Would you favor or oppose a congressional deal that gives undocumented immigrants brought here by their parents work permits and a path to citizenship in exchange for increasing merit preference over preference for relatives, eliminating the diversity visa lottery, and funding barrier security on the U.S.-Mexico border?" Penn asked. Sixty-three percent supported the plan, while 37 percent opposed.

"Overall, Americans want to show compassion for those that are here, but want much tougher enforcement of immigration laws," Penn said.

Reading Penn's questions, and the respondents' answers, it was hard not to think of the presidency of Bill Clinton, for whom Penn worked in the 1990s. Clinton's relatively tough stance on illegal immigration reflected Democratic thinking of the time. Penn's questions still do, at least in the way they are worded. "In these polls I try to be as detailed in the policy questions as I was polling for six years for President Clinton," Penn said, "because public opinion in America is far more nuanced than people realize — small changes in policy make a big difference." But Bill Clinton left office in 2001, in the faraway pre-progressive days of the Democratic Party. Today, the party's position on immigration has moved so far left that it is unrecognizable to some old-style Clinton Democrats. And if Penn's findings are correct, most Americans are now closer to President Trump than present-day Democratic leaders.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.



OTHER VIEWS

It's hotter than it looks

The Eugene Register-Guard

A Roseburg mother was charged with second-degree manslaughter earlier this month when her 21-month-old daughter died after being left unattended in a vehicle for several hours; the mother said she thought she had left her baby at day care.

Even on mild days — it was only about 80 degrees in Roseburg — temperatures inside a vehicle can rise by more than 20 degrees in 15 minutes. Children have died in parked cars when outside temperatures were as low as 63 degrees.

Leaving windows partially open makes little difference, nor is parking in the shade a reliable safeguard, according to a University of California at San Diego study, which found that a child's body temperature could

reach 104 degrees in less than two hours, even in the shade.

An Oregon law that went into effect last year absolves bystanders of liability for damage if they enter a car to rescue a child or pet they believe is in imminent danger. But no one should rely on bystanders to keep a child from harm. The only way to prevent needless deaths of children, and pets, is to never leave either unattended in a parked car in warm weather, not even for what is expected to be just a short errand. This includes guarding against accidentally leaving a child in a car — by putting a purse or other needed item next to a child in the back seat, for example.

So far this year, 18 children have died from heat stroke in the United States after being left in cars. That is 18 too many.

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