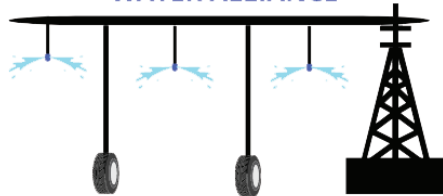


OREGON AGRICULTURAL
WATER ALLIANCE

OTHER VIEWS

OAWA

Coming together to secure our water future

Oregon agriculture continues to persevere amidst historic drought conditions, worldwide supply chain issues, burdensome and unnecessary regulation and global food insecurity at a level not seen in recent memory.

As an industry we can do a lot, but it's time to recognize that things must change. As droughts increase in severity and intensity, we must position ourselves to be resilient and adaptable when it comes to changing conditions.

Our members are consistently looking for innovative new ways to get the work done in an efficient and sustainable manner while continuing their significant role in feeding and clothing the world and making substantial contributions to the statewide, national and global economy.

If we are going to continue to be part of the solution, it is essential that we are able to access our most basic need: Water.

Recently, our organizations partnered together to form the Oregon Agricultural Water Alliance, which will focus on strategic water investments and common-sense policies to promote sound water management and agricultural sustainability throughout our beautiful state. The need for this work has never been greater.

Collectively, our organizations represent a broad spectrum of individuals and entities that serve nearly 600,000 irrigated acres and represent over 14,000 producers of food and other agricultural products in Oregon.

The future of irrigated agriculture and the survival of family-owned and operated farms and ranches in Oregon is at risk like never before. As organizations with diverse memberships throughout the state, we can no longer afford to work separately if we hope to bring much needed change to the state's water management. We recognize that together, we are stronger, and this is how we will operate as we look ahead to a critical legislative session and key election cycle in the months to come.

Our state cannot risk continuing down the path of disinvestment in water storage. state and federal agencies must be accountable for effective and efficient water management. Oregon needs outcome focused partnerships, not regulatory roadblocks that penalize creative problem solving. As opportunities arise, we need to be prepared to leverage federal funding for state and local infrastructure projects.

Moreover, the state must facilitate opportunities as part of its own water resources strategy. Unfortunately, we are already behind on this front.

As an alliance, we will work to shift state water policy to prioritize maintaining an adequate, safe, and affordable food supply, creating more water storage both above and below ground, creating drought-resilient programs and projects, increasing interstate cooperation in water supply and management, demanding more agency accountability, and reducing costly and unnecessary state agency litigation.

Together, we plan to create positive change by developing viable pathways for water projects implementation, advocating for needed changes to agency processes and administration, conducting tours for legislators and agency staff to highlight opportunities to improve or create water projects, and proactively supporting innovation.

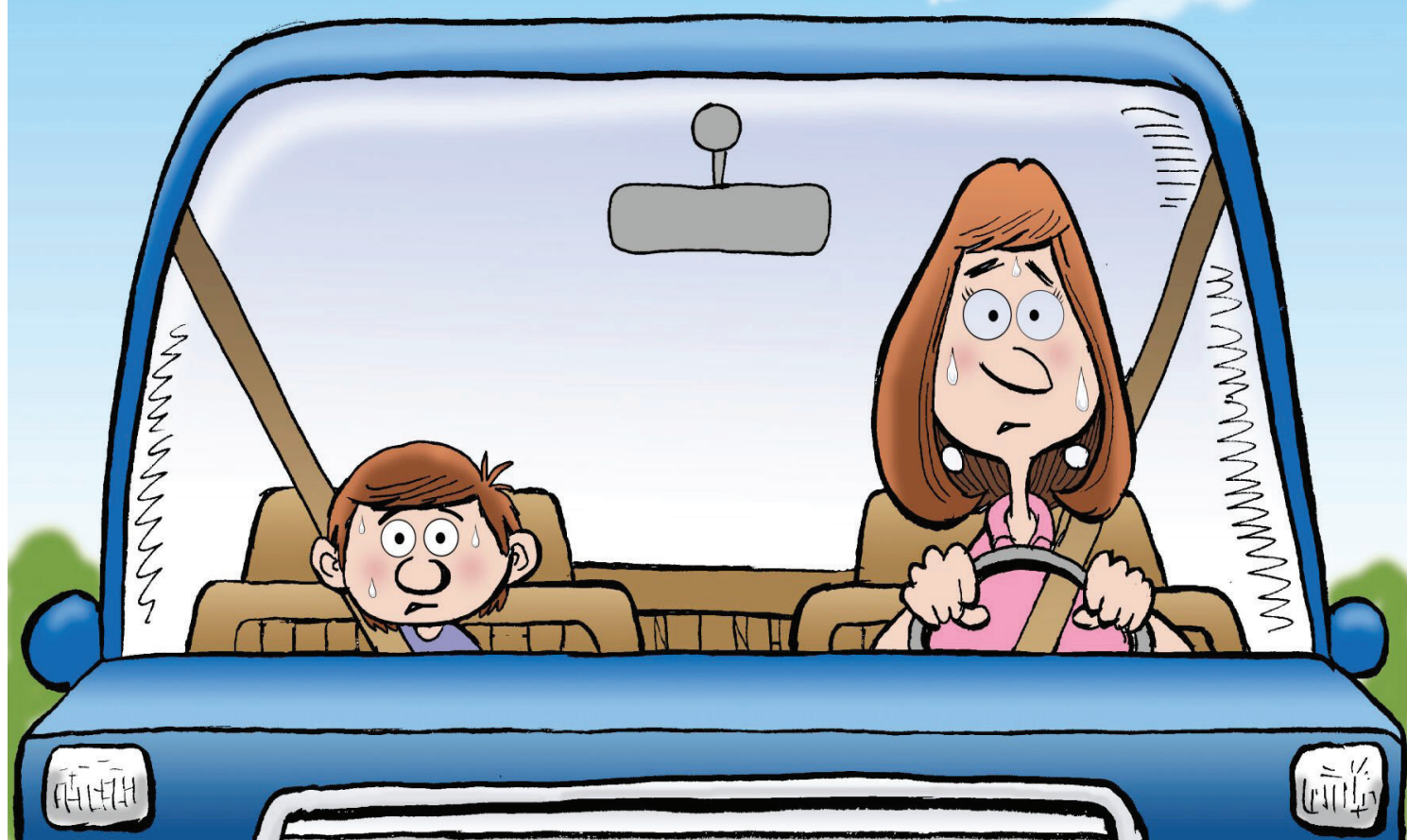
We believe it is critical that the public be informed about the importance of irrigated agriculture for the state's future health and prosperity. A recent poll asked Oregonians about the importance of the agriculture and livestock sectors to Oregon's economy; a whopping 70% of Oregonians, across a wide range of ages, political parties, and geographic areas, responded that the industries are "extremely important."

Without the proper investment in water storage, and a shift in water policy and management, it will be a matter of time before we lose significant portions of our distinctive and diverse agriculture industry — a critical piece of what makes our state the exceptional and unique place that it is.

To learn more about the alliance, please visit: www.oawa.info.

Signatories to this column are: Todd Nash, president of Oregon Cattlemen's Association; Mike Miranda, president of Oregon Dairy Farmers Association; Angi Bailey, president of Oregon Farm Bureau; Josh Robinson, president of Oregon Association of Nurseries; Jake Madison, president of Northeast Oregon Water Association; Rex Barber, president of Water for Life Inc.; and Brian Hampson, president of Oregon Water Resources Congress.

BACK TO SCHOOL



Governor's debate highlights divisions

OTHER VIEWS

Dick Hughes



“What does a governor actually do each day?”

That's the first question I'd like someone to ask at the next Oregon gubernatorial debate among Democrat Tina Kotek, Republican Christine Drazan and unaffiliated candidate Betsy Johnson.

No matter which of the three is elected in November, it will be a lively transition from term-limited Gov. Kate Brown. Any doubts were erased by the entertaining yet substantive debate hosted in late July by the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association.

The candidates went after one another while also managing to mostly stay on topic.

But if the three ex-lawmakers learned anything from the respectful workplace training that had been mandated at the Legislature, they didn't show it.

Question No. 2 would be: “You've spent the campaign castigating each other while at the same time vowing to bring Oregonians together. How can we believe that vow? How would you accomplish that?”

This two-part question is the crux of being a good governor. An effective campaigner doesn't necessarily translate into being an effective leader. Oregon already is deeply divided. Relationships within the state Capitol often are tense; some would say toxic. And the constant campaign bashing that voters will endure this fall — not

only in this race — can't be good for our state.

Or our state of mind.

Building relationships simply within the Capitol isn't easy. Gov. Ted Kulongoski tried it by going bowling with lawmakers. It helped ... for a while. Brown, a former legislative leader, tried by inviting lawmakers to the governor's mansion.

Back to Question No. 1, perhaps a partial reason for Brown's dismal statewide popularity rating is that Oregonians don't

“BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS SIMPLY WITHIN THE CAPITOL ISN'T EASY. GOV. TED KULONGOSKI TRIED IT BY GOING BOWLING WITH LAWMAKERS. IT HELPED ... FOR A WHILE. BROWN, A FORMER LEGISLATIVE LEADER, TRIED BY INVITING LAWMAKERS TO THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION.”

know what she does. Asked for specifics about how she interacted with legislators on an important bill, or what she did to broker a landmark timber agreement, she would offer few details.

That's the way Brown is. I've never figured out why.

As for the first governor's debate, it solidified the three major candidates' running lanes:

Kotek is the Portland progressive and policy wonk with a long list of legislative

accomplishments. She was right when she intoned that the state's vexing problems have no quick fixes or easy solutions.

Drazan is the Republican change agent running against decades of Democratic rule. She offered the most compelling personal story and was most at ease talking without notes.

Johnson is firing both barrels, casting the other two as extremes while she tries to claim a unifying middle. Often acerbic, she's most quotable: “To Tina I'm too conservative and to Christine I'm too liberal.”

The debate produced only a few stumbles. Johnson talked about converting the former Wapato Jail in Portland and said Bend was considering a similar model for serving homeless individuals. Bend's possibility has since been disputed.

In a question to Drazan, Kotek contended that Drazan had never admitted Joe Biden won the 2020 presidential election and Donald Trump lost. That question exhibited poor research by Kotek's team. Drazan long has been on the record saying Biden won, as she did in response to Kotek.

Kotek also accused Johnson of misrepresenting Kotek's positions, although the same could be said the other way around.

The debate got hottest when Drazan aimed her closing statement primarily at Johnson, who potentially could draw votes away from her as well as Kotek. She accused Johnson of shedding her Democratic skin to pursue additional power by running for governor.

Here's a potential Question No. 3: “What is something you regret saying on the campaign trail this year — perhaps in a debate — and why?”

Dick Hughes has been covering the Oregon political scene since 1976.

Logging interests now dominate forest collaboratives

OTHER VIEWS

Paula Hood



Mark Webb, director of the Blue Mountains Forest Partners collaborative, recently attacked a colleague who dared to shed light on what's actually happening across public lands in Eastern Oregon.

Forest collaborative groups, such as the BMFP, were initially created to bring together diverse interests, such as loggers and environmentalists, to restore forests. Unfortunately, collaboratives no longer work toward common ground and are increasingly dominated by extractive interests. Collaborative groups have ample financial incentives to promote logging, with millions of dollars in government subsidies going to collaborative members, staff and intermediary groups.

Regrettably, there is a tremendous disconnect between what the U.S. Forest Service and collaboratives put forth to the public and what is actually happening on the ground. Despite Webb's claims that the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest no longer logs old growth, there are centuries-old fresh stumps that say otherwise. I know there are hundreds more acres of old-growth at risk in the Big Mosquito project on the Malheur. I've read documents that show the Umatilla is proposing logging up to 27,000 acres of pristine forests. I've been in meetings where the agency admitted they are develop-

ing proposals to log roadless forests while side-stepping standard environmental review.

Collaboratives don't want to hear inconvenient truths about climate change and carbon storage, or protecting clean water and wildlife. I spent years working in good faith at the BMFP. Unfortunately, it was all too clear that there is no place at the collaborative table for people who aren't on board with logging more and bigger trees at an ever-increasing pace and scale, while scrapping previously agreed upon environmental sideboards.

Folks can split hairs about how and why big trees continue to be cut down in

“AS WE FACE A CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY CRISIS, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE A SINGLE STEP IN THE WRONG DIRECTION JUST TO GET ALONG.”

timber sale after timber sale on national forests in Eastern Oregon. The fact of the matter is that they are being cut down. Ultimately, whether big trees are cut down to clear cable corridors for steep slope logging, because they're designated “hazards” or to simply get the cut out — at the end of the day, it doesn't change the fact that those big trees are gone.

Collaboratives may have good intentions, but results matter. That's why I raised alarm bells when I found dozens of big old trees cut down in the Big Mosquito Large Landscape Restoration Project in Malheur National Forest. In justifying the Trump administration's efforts to

weaken protections for big trees, the U.S. Forest Service and the BMFP collaborative said that Big Mosquito was a model for what we could look forward to across the region. With so little of our mature and old forests remaining, how much more can we afford to lose?

Big trees greater than 20 inches in diameter comprise only about 3% of trees in our region, because most were logged over the past 150 years. They're the foundations of mature and old forests, and critically important for wildlife, stream habitats and clean water.

The reality we're seeing on the ground is that logging is commonly heavy-handed and destructive. The U.S. Forest Service and collaboratives repeatedly gloss over and ignore the damage logging does to mature and old forests, wildlife, water quality and fish.

Restoring our forests requires protecting what we have left. It doesn't involve logging steep slopes, cutting down big old trees and arguing semantics while the world gets hotter.

My colleague Rob Klavins was right — the logging of 18 big trees near Bend was a big deal. However, in places obscure to many Oregonians, these things are happening on a much larger scale and without scrutiny.

As we face a climate and biodiversity crisis, we can't afford to take a single step in the wrong direction just to get along.

Paula Hood is co-director of Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project, a Fossil-based nonprofit that works to protect and restore the ecosystems of the Blue Mountains and eastern Oregon Cascades. This column originally appeared on the Oregon Capital Chronicle website.