

EDITORIAL

3 candidates for governor explain views on water

BULLETIN EDITORIAL BOARD

Oregon's future depends on a system of water management built for the past.

Water rights are not based on need or how efficiently water is used. The state arguably does not have enough data about how much water it has and how it is used. Regulations can get in the way of moving water to where it is needed.

We asked the three likely candidates for governor — Republican Christine Drazan, independent Betsy Johnson and Democrat Tina Kotek — a few questions about water. We had to abbreviate their responses in many cases and put the responses in alphabetical order.

We hope that this gives you more information when you are thinking about who to vote for in November.

Do Oregon's water laws need to be changed? What specifically do you feel needs to be changed and how specifically should it be changed?

Drazan: ...I am not supportive of overturning the existing structure, but there are clearly some opportunities to improve outcomes for our farmers and ranchers. We need to pursue innovations in how we manage water, invest in large-scale storage, and continue to invest in innovation for conservation of water. At the end of the day, we need leadership on this issue that recognizes the importance of supporting our agriculture sector while also respecting the other stakeholders and the need to protect our salmon and manage other environmental considerations. We also need leadership at the state level that is prepared to stand up to the federal government and assert our rights as a state.

Johnson: I certainly hope that no one running for governor would contend that our water laws are adequate to our water needs.... There's no question that our laws need to change, the real question is how do they need to change, who needs to be involved in that conversation and what data are we missing in order to plot the path forward toward an actual strategic water plan for the state. ...

Local partners need reliable leadership, strong administration, and a clear vision that they are not getting from Salem and as Oregon's independent governor, I will fix that. Next, we need a statewide plan that builds up from a base of at least regional planning, as places like Umatilla, Tillamook and Klamath Counties all face different challenges.... I hope I am conveying the strong impression that I realize that before we can change our laws, we must change the structures within which we are now making our laws....

Kotek: Not necessarily. The first order of business is to figure out if we can improve how water is shared and managed under existing water law. That's why I made sure the state budget included funding in 2021 to convene a workgroup of agricultural water users, municipalities, conservation groups, tribal interests, environmental justice organizations, and state agencies to have a balanced, strategic conversation about how the state can build on Oregon's 100 Year Water Vision. I am hopeful that this group, which includes capable, bipartisan leadership from Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, and Rep. Ken Helm, D-Beaverton, will be able to come to consensus recommendations. In the meantime, I also support investing more federal and state dollars in water infrastructure projects....

Does Oregon sufficiently measure water use? What if any changes should be made?

Drazan: In general, we have sufficient information on water use from districts and local governments who provide their own measurements. Any changes in the way we collect and assess data should be made with the end goal of increasing access to water for those that need it. I'm skeptical of adding any layers of bureaucracy and red tape to our current system unless it advances a specific public policy goal.

Johnson: It is easy to say we need more data to make better decisions. I am certain every politician will say that. But before we expand the data collection apparatus and requirements, we need an effort to properly assess the value of the data we are currently collecting and better tie

data collection to decision-making and accountability.... Having said that, I believe we suffer now from insufficient data to predict future water needs as we track current usage with little understanding of the factors influencing fluctuations. Finally, we need the state to collect data with agreed upon metrics that goes beyond usage to better shape and understand need parameters as water use and access become inherently more competitive.... The burden of collecting additional data must lie with the state....

Kotek: No. We need more data to understand the amount of water available in our rivers, streams, and aquifers. I support the ongoing work to build a database that can then be used to inform what changes need to be made.

Over allocation of our water resources and inefficient use of irrigation water has led to water shortages for Central Oregon's farmers. What changes, if any, do you recommend to address this?

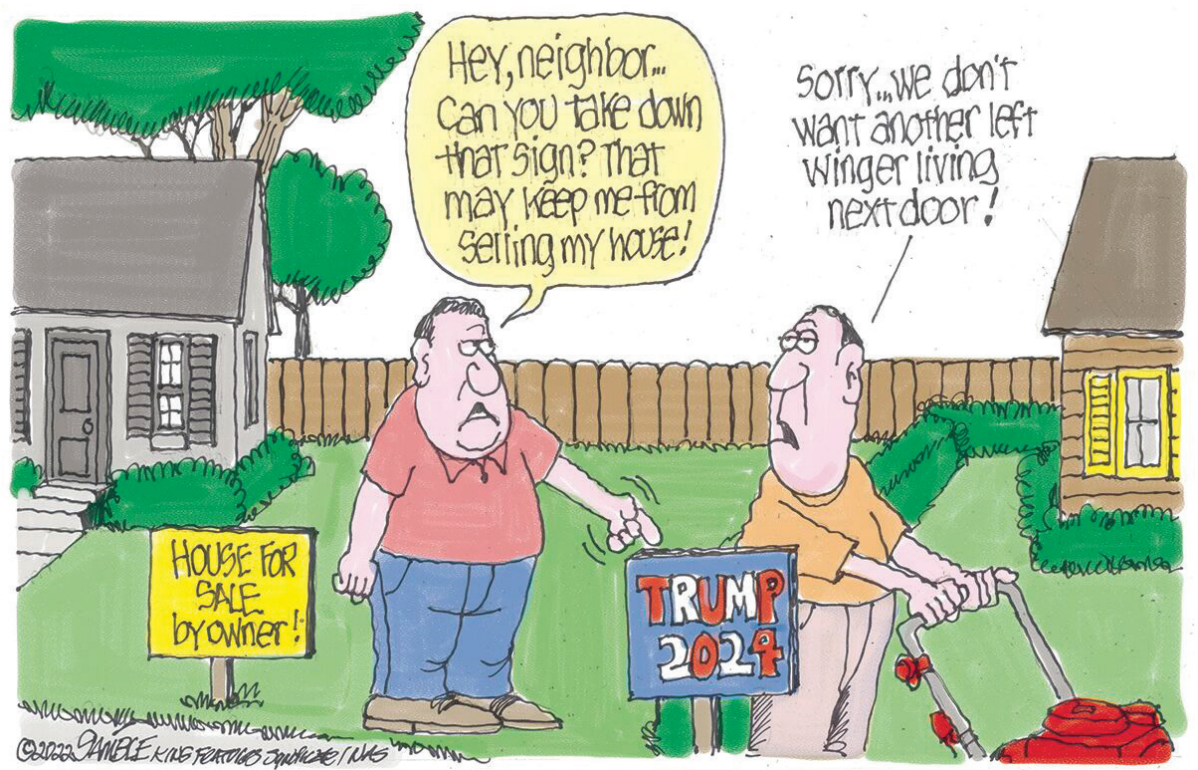
Drazan: As governor, I will have the opportunity to call for accountability from the Oregon Water Resources Department. We need flexibility to ensure the state is a partner, not an adversary, to address the needs of water users. OWRD needs to embrace a culture of collaboration and recognize that these users have a right to water and we have to work to ensure that continues. We also need to ensure that OWRD is more responsive to water users when disputes come up. It's not acceptable for bureaucrats to drag their feet when an individual's access to water or even livelihood hangs in the balance.

Johnson: ... (A)s I said in the answer to the first question, we need to better structure and follow regional water decision-making with stronger participation from stakeholders and local jurisdictions. Right now, those tables are assembled largely to watch the state mismanage water policy with little power to do anything about it. So, I want to acknowledge that the problem your question implies has stemmed from poor decision-making that itself comes from poor decision-making structures....

I would point out that while I don't know enough about the overuse or irrigation inefficiencies in Central Oregon in order to act as though I could mandate a solution, I can say that I understand how those issues arise from our current system, how they can only be solved with the right people at the table, and that they will not be solved at the departmental level even under a Johnson administration. The strength I offer as an independent governor is that I will both be capable of and expected to change the rules by which we conduct both politics and policy. ...

Kotek: We need to change state policy to stop issuing water rights until we know that there is enough water to satisfy those rights. That will require better data about groundwater and surface water resources, thoughtful place-based planning processes, and ongoing leadership from legislators, local partners, and state agencies.

The fact is that climate change will only worsen the devastation that farmers, wildlife, and rural economies are already experiencing from years of historic droughts and wildfires. As governor, I will ensure that the state continues leading with a collaborative approach to address Oregon's critical and complex water issues.



YOUR VIEWS

Belittling science by opposing quiet zone, therapeutic use of psilocybin

Can anyone imagine the devastation that a quiet zone and the medical and therapeutic use of psilocybin mushrooms will wreak? Picture naked people running and screaming, arms flailing, straight into an oncoming train!

Yessiree, you ain't a gonna fool us here in old Baker City with your radical nonsense and high falooten facts and science. You can just take all that there "quiet zones, healthier, safer, quality of life" crapola and shove it! Our children, teachers, old and sick people been listening to them train horns long before you libtards stuck your radical noses in it.

First you wanted us to believe maryjuwana could be used for medicine, now it's mushrooms!

Them there shellshocked and injured veterans already have pills. They don't need no dope. Ain't no so-called doctors or shrinks gonna tell me dope is gonna prevent suicides or help addicted people that's just crazy talk! Dope is dope. ... no matter how much they wanna lie about all the fancy research and claims of good things. Yeah sure, just like pot was supposed to help cancer patients, eating disorders and chronic pain.

I ain't no fool. I'm a gonna go to the liquor store cause I need another bottle. ... mighten help me forget about

the idjuts what wanna bring drugs into our city. The whole damned sordid affair is Biden's fault.

Mike Meyer
Baker City

Idaho Power lacks adequate planning for B2H

For 13 years Idaho Power Co. has been trying to railroad the 310-mile-long B2H, Boardman to Hemingway power lines through Eastern Oregon. No one wants it, but Idaho Power keeps pushing, trying to outflank the public and government agencies, state and federal.

By the time they go into service they will be archaic, but Idaho Power gets around 10% of building cost bonus, most of which will go into stockholders' pockets. Nor does Idaho Power have an adequate fire plan for when the lines break and start fires, as it did in Paradise, California, when PG&E ignited fire. Death toll: 85 people.

Nor has weed control from building the project been properly addressed. The power lines cross the Oregon Trail numerous times, but Idaho Power Co. could care less about preserving them or the heritage that goes with them: Their plan is to place their lines directly in front of the \$16 million Oregon Trail interpretive center outside of Baker City. The list goes on.

Whit Deschner
Baker City

OTHER VIEWS

Lessons from Normandy: War is truly a tool of last resort

BY ELIZABETH SHACKELFORD

I recently visited the beaches of Normandy and was awestruck at the scale of what took place there 78 years ago. The sheer horror it must have been is hard to capture in words, but the scars are still visible.

Dozens of massive craters dot the fields. The landscape is interspersed with German fortifications reinforced with concrete two meters thick. Huge tangles of metal debris, part of the harbor constructions used to ferry in half a million troops and cargo, are still casually strewn across the beaches and protruding from the water, rusting just off quaint French coastal towns.

It was a massive operation. More than 1,000 aircraft dropped 23,000 paratroops behind German lines in the dark amid incoming fire just after midnight. At dawn, 73,000 Americans joined about 80,000 other allied troops to storm the beaches along 50 miles of coastline.

The morning was cool and the water colder. Soldiers lugging nearly 75 pounds of gear each forced their way through rough seas only to reach a treacherous shore where they would then navigate stakes, metal girders and land mines, all while Nazis rained fire down upon them. Many would die there or farther inland as the battle continued.

How do you motivate anyone to do that? And what would compel anyone to ask so many people to?

These questions were on my mind when I heard of the death of Bradford Freeman, the last living member of the Band of Brothers company that parachuted into Normandy on D-Day. We've recently lost Hershel "Woody" Williams as well, the last surviving World War II Medal of Honor recipient.

More than 16 million Americans served in World War II. But we're starting to lose the very last veterans of that war, one of the few we've fought in our history that we can confidently call just.

What lessons should we be learning from the Greatest Generation before they're gone?

The Normandy invasion was the ugly, painful crowning moment of that response. The logistics were mind-boggling and the plan audacious. But nothing less could turn the war around and save Europe, and the world, from the march of totalitarianism. In many of the wars we have fought since, we have strayed far from these parameters.

I often wonder what my grandfather, a U.S. Marine who served in the Pacific, would say. His faded photos in jungle scenes were intriguing but revealed little, and he said even less about it. He died when I was young, long haunted by what they called "shell shock" back then.

I imagine that he, and many others of his generation, would tell us that war is so horrific that you should avoid it at almost any cost. But if it's something so vital that you simply must fight for it, you better be ready to give it your all.

In many ways, that is the story of America's engagement in World War II. We entered reluctantly — forced by the circumstances of a direct attack on our homeland. We responded with everything we had, and it transformed a culture and economy for generations.

The Normandy invasion was the ugly, painful crowning moment of that response. The logistics were mind-boggling and the plan audacious. But nothing less could turn the war around and save Europe, and the world, from the march of totalitarianism.

In many of the wars we have fought since, we have strayed far from these parameters. We have fought wars that were not essential and even damaging to American security and prosperity. It shouldn't be surprising that we tended to lose

these wars of choice. It's harder to fight effectively if it isn't clear what you're fighting for.

So what lessons might that offer us today? The war in Ukraine is a good test case. The fight came to the Ukrainian people — they had little choice. We do not face a similar existential threat now, and thus have wisely avoided expanding this awful war beyond Ukraine by getting directly involved in the fight.

But sometimes simply not entering a war isn't enough. The United States and our allies must at times take the necessary steps to deter such aggression. That is the case with Ukraine, and that means using all the tools available to us short of joining the war to help Ukraine succeed.

If Putin's violent land grab in Europe succeeds instead, the international system we helped build and benefit from will be deeply undermined. That system checks aggression and helps keep us safe, prosperous and free. The threat to us directly might not be grave enough yet to risk American lives, but we'd be wise to prevent it from reaching that point while we're still able.

Ukraine's Greatest Generation is being forged today as they fight and die for their country's freedom. Their fight against aggression and authoritarianism echoes the Allies' fight in World War II. By supporting their effort, we can hopefully avoid having to ask another generation of Americans in the future to suffer what Bradford Freeman, Woody Williams, my grandfather and millions of others did.

This is important for Americans to remember today as we contend with economic struggles and domestic strife at home. If we continue to rigorously invest in helping Ukraine with diplomatic, economic and military assistance efforts now, we might not have to fight aggression and authoritarianism ourselves in the future.

■ Elizabeth Shackelford is a senior fellow on U.S. foreign policy with the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. She was previously a U.S. diplomat and is author of "The Dissent Channel: American Diplomacy in a Dishonest Age."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in letters.
- Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must include an address and phone number (for

verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.

• Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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