



EO Media Group/Sierra Dawn McClain
Oregon farmer Jim McKay with his nursery crops.

Oregon leaders need to address water challenges

The Oregon Legislature has hit on a winner with the Irrigation District Temporary Transfers Pilot Project.

While the name sounds a bit off-putting, the project is effective. It allows some irrigation districts to internally make temporary transfers between water users. The project has been in operation 18 years. During that time it has been extended and expanded to 15 of the state's 40 or so irrigation districts.

The beauty of the project is its simplicity. A farmer or rancher within an irrigation district with an unused water allocation can transfer it temporarily to someone who needs it.

This not only addresses some of the water shortages that have arisen over the years, but it helps farmers and ranchers hold onto water allocations that otherwise might be lost, courtesy of the state's "use it or lose it" law.

While not perfect — nothing is — the project brings out the best in cooperative spirit among farmers in addition to getting water to where it's needed.

It is time for the legislature to expand the program to all Oregon irrigation districts and make it permanent.

While they're tackling water issues, legislators should take a close look at the Oregon Water Resources Department, which appears to be chronically underfunded and understaffed.

The department has a national reputation for its sluggish performance. Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska has found the state has an unnecessarily complex and bureaucratic water transfer system.

Year after year, the department also reports that it is behind in its work, in part because of red tape and in part because the Legislature does not provide enough money from the general fund. Some believe water users

should provide most of the department's funding, but since the state owns the water, all citizens should pony up adequate funding to manage it.

After all, everyone eats the food grown with that water.

More also needs to be done.

Water issues in Oregon will not go away. The state needs a flexible game plan for managing the water that grows our food and powers our economy. Leaders need to take a close look at everything from recharging aquifers in the winter to lake taps to increasing water storage behind dams.

Instead of constantly talking about taking out dams, we should be looking at ways to increase their number and capacity. That's because scientists say the mountain snowpacks that serve as water storage will continue to shrink.

We should also come up with a statewide plan to transfer water from locations with plenty of water to those facing drought and other shortages. California, for example, has a massive intrastate water transfer system.

Climate change means Oregonians will have to be smarter in how they manage water.

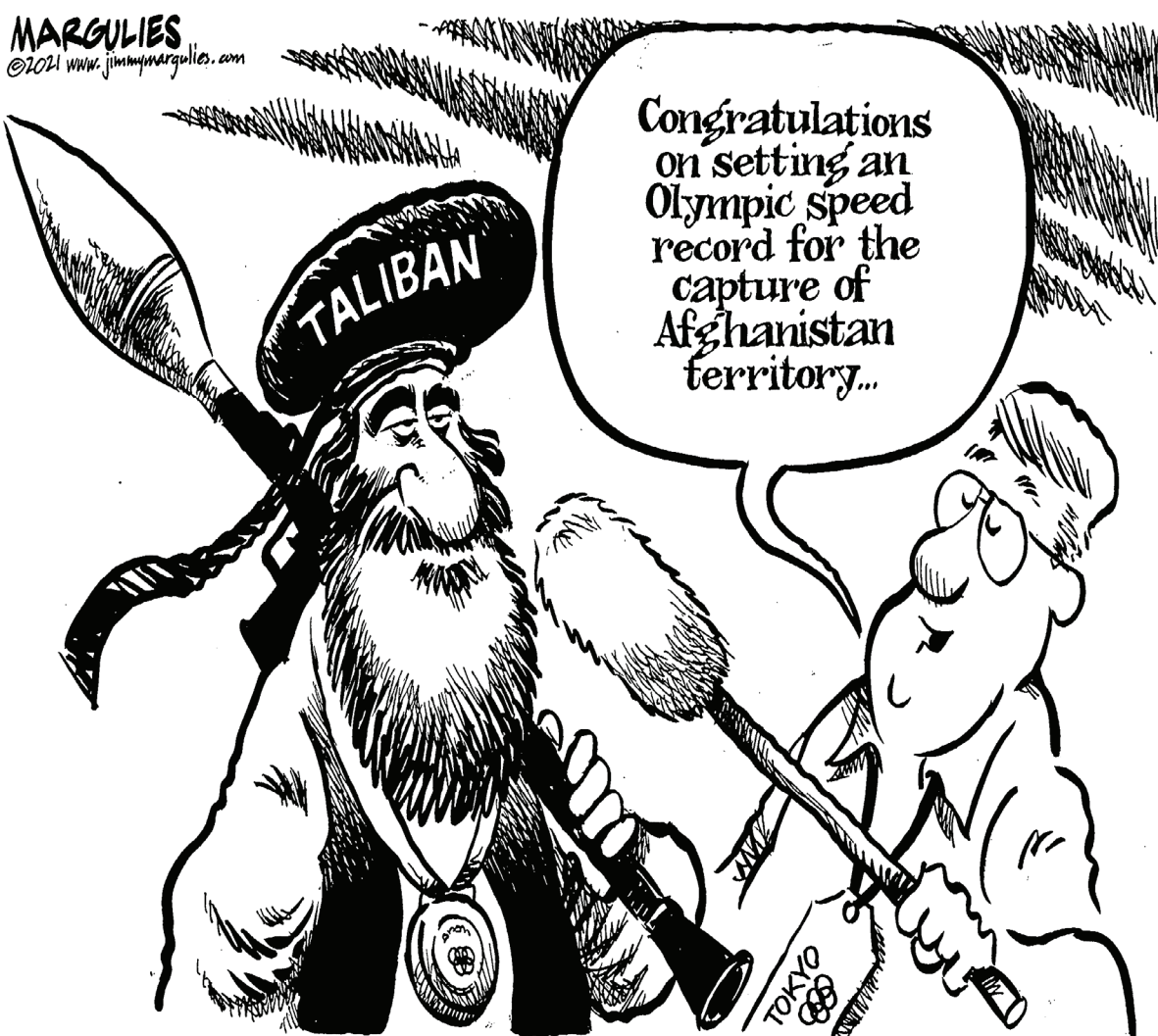
In Idaho, a years-long effort is underway to replenish the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer. In the past five years, 2.3 million acre-feet of water has been added to the aquifer, a remarkable achievement.

Idaho legislators know they have their work cut out for them, and continue to invest in aquifer recharge, adding to dam capacity and other efforts that will keep that state's economy healthy and growing. They have a collective vision for making that happen.

Oregon's leaders would do well to take a close look at how innovation and investment can address the many water challenges facing them in the near and distant future.

Expanding the Irrigation District Temporary Transfers Pilot Project statewide and making it permanent is just a start.

MARGULIES
©2021 www.jimmymargulies.com



EDUCATION CORNER

Time for school supplies

It's back-to-school time. After this last year, our children experienced many futuristic forms of back to school. Very few were what we would consider normal with the pandemic happening around us. The question is: What will school look like this coming fall? For the most part, something more traditional. Some good and not-so-good strategies happened over the past school year. Now we'll see which ones remain and which ones do not.

One thing that won't change for sure and is so important to kids is school supplies. The excitement of what is to come, the organizing of new pencils, rulers, crayons and scissors marks the beginning of school. The anticipation for that first day of school and the days ahead makes this an exciting time of the year for children.

The beginning of the school year is also an excellent learning opportunity for kids with the planning and anticipation, evaluating and adjusting they are, full of questions as they anticipate the coming school year. It can be frustrating for parents, however.

Use this time to expand your children's minds. Students after first grade should be able to create their own supply lists. Ask them to calculate what the cost would be for you. You can also provide them with an amount to spend (budget) and create their shopping list. Don't limit it to just school supplies. Clothing is an important part as well.



Dr. Scott Smith

That simple activity provides your child with the opportunity to use multiple life skills that will provide a strong foundation for not only the school year ahead but lifelong understanding of shopping and the opportunity to guide them. It reinforces their writing skills as they create their lists. It forces them to use evaluative skills as they decide which items would be best. Having to stay within their budget amount or even just letting you know how much it will cost forces the use of math skills.

Preschool, kindergarten and first-grade students have not had exposure to school supply preparation, but they are aware of it and get excited. Time and conversation with them are pivotal in the building of their understanding and for developing life skills. They are also able to start making some guided choices. Giving them the options between which pencils they would like to buy and telling you why they made their choice builds their understanding of language at their level. Ask questions such as, "What do you think you will be using these scissors for at school?"

We live in a busy world, and there are times as adults and parents that our "to-do" list is so long it seems easier to go get school sup-

plies bought and ready for kids. If this happens, there are still ways to build that experience with your child. Have them check and see if what you bought matches the list from the school. You can have the kids add up what you spent by using the receipt and locating the price. They can check to make sure everything you bought is there (pull something out and leave it in the car and have them find it). These are life problem-solving skills your children will always use, and the activity makes for significant interaction with them. It may even keep them busy and give you a chance to catch up on other items.

Setting a couple of hours aside to take your children school shopping is one of the biggest keys to making this activity a success. Having them create their list before going will provide discussion points and boundaries that should make for an enjoyable experience. As busy parents, we want the job done, but don't miss an opportunity for you and your child that they may carry on when their children are headed to school.

Dr. Scott Smith is a Umatilla County educator with 40-plus years of experience. He taught at McNary Heights Elementary School and then for Eastern Oregon University in their teacher education program at Blue Mountain Community College. He serves on the Decoding Dyslexia — OR board as their parent-teacher liaison.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'The supreme law of this land'

To the Editor:

The supreme law of this land is the Constitution of the United States of America as stated in Article Six of that document.

Article VI: "This Constitution and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof ... shall be the Supreme Law of the land and the judges of every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any state to the contrary notwithstanding ... and the members of the several state legislatures ... shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution."

I believe that's pretty plain so let's turn back to Article IV, Section Four.

Article IV, Section 4: "The United States shall guarantee to

every state in this union a Republican form of Government and shall protect each of them against invasion, and on application of the legislature or of the executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic violence."

A republican form of government includes the legislature. The legislature being the body of persons in a state invested with power to make, alter and repeal laws. Our state legislature has excused themselves from this responsibility voting 28 to 27 to have no oversight (watchful care or supervision) of our governor's powers. They have surrendered their duty and given us over to an arbitrator (one with absolute power of deciding).

The definition of dictator is quite similar, being "one who exercises or in whom is vested supreme authority in a state." Without a legislature our state has abrogated the constitutional guarantee of the United States of America and any

laws contrary to the supreme law of this land I am not liable to comply with.

Michael R. Christensen
John Day

Seeking support from the sheriff

To the Editor:

I am writing a letter of support for the articulate, well-spoken letter Union County Sheriff Cody Bowen wrote to Gov. Kate Brown on Aug. 16 regarding the latest mask mandate.

I cannot add one word to it. What I can say is I would like to see our Sheriff Todd McKinley add his own support to what Sheriff Bowen said.

Grant County, let's take a stand against more mandates and restrictions.

Leslie Barnett
Long Creek



Blue Mountain EAGLE
Published every Wednesday by ecMEDIA group
MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Grant County's Weekly Newspaper

Editor & General Manager Sean Hart, editor@bmeagle.com
Reporter Steven Mitchell, steven@bmeagle.com
Sports sports@bmeagle.com
Multimedia Alex Wittwer, awittwer@eomediagroup.com
Marketing Rep Kim Kell, ads@bmeagle.com
Office Assistant Alixandra Hand, office@bmeagle.com

Online: MyEagleNews.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES (including online access)
One year \$51
Monthly autopay \$4.25

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

Phone: 541-575-0710

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER send address changes to: Blue Mountain Eagle 195 N. Canyon Blvd. John Day, OR 97845-1187 USPS 226-340

Copyright © 2021 Blue Mountain Eagle All rights reserved. No part of this publication covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means — graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, taping or information storage and retrieval systems — without written permission of the publisher.

facebook.com/MyEagleNews @MyEagleNews