

OUR VIEW

Why Oregon must develop a water plan

Oregon desperately needs a coordinated, effective, result-oriented and clear water policy that the Legislature has approved and the governor supports.

Without it, irrigators and even municipalities will have to fend for themselves.

But that's what they've had to do for decades.

Around the state, water issues have been all but ignored.

In Klamath Falls, for example, water problems have existed for decades, yet the state has been either silent or ineffective in resolving them.

In dry Central Oregon, the rapid population growth is straining the water supply, but the state is remarkably silent on how to address it.

Elsewhere, water supplies and quality are problems, including in the Willamette Valley, Portland and Eastern Oregon.

When irrigation districts do try to expand water storage, the state attaches strings that throw the project into question.

Near Hood River, for example, the Farmers Irrigation District invested millions of dollars to raise the Kingsley Dam to increase the amount of water stored behind it.

Only now the district's leaders worry that the state has attached environmental strings to the project funding that mean more water can't be stored unless the stream flow is higher than regulators require.

The irrigators worry the stream flow requirement is unrealistically high, but the Oregon Water Resources Department disputes that.

Either way, the state will have partially funded water storage that won't be used during the driest years, when it's needed most.

That may make sense to someone, but to water users — and taxpayers — it makes no sense.

Even when the Legislature decides to help with water projects, its intentions are subverted. In 2013, it passed a water supply grant program. The idea was to help irrigators and others build more storage. But the rule-making turned it into an "unmitigated disaster," according to Jeff Stone, executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, adding that "rule-making is where good bills go to die because everyone re-litigates all they wanted in the first place."

Environmental groups say that because public money is involved, water users should expect to meet higher standards.

That's an interesting thought, but the logic is missing. If the state's rules don't follow the legislation and make adding storage unaffordable, they fail to accomplish what the Legislature wanted.

By doing that, the agencies make the Legislature look inept. Legislators see the shortcomings of the current mess.

Groups that need state help for storage projects avoid the Water Resources Department, which in turn says it must follow the state constitution's mandates.

Lawmakers support "place-based" planning for water, allowing communities to develop plans. Unfortunately, they don't have the authority to put those plans into effect, according to Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane and vice chair of the House Water Committee.

Rep. Ken Helm, D-Beaverton, said the state needs a "water czar," which the next governor should appoint. "We need leadership from the governor. There's no substitute for that," he said.

What Oregon needs, though, is leadership in the Legislature to recognize the critical importance of water statewide and to development a statewide framework that will help communities implement water plans.

Then they need to tell state agencies that the goal is to wisely manage the water resources, not create more hoops for irrigation districts and others to jump through.



FARMER'S FATE

Making waves in a no-wake zone

I've got corn roasting on the barbecue
Got a three day tan in my new swimsuit
Sitting on a surf board on the water blue
Hey, I'm doing alright
Yeah I think I'll listen to these homemade tunes
feeling pretty good this afternoon
It's neither drink nor drug induced
No, I'm just doing alright
and it's a great day to be alive
I know the band's still playing
when I close my eyes
There's hard times in the neighborhood
But why can't every day be just this good?



Brianna Walker

Back this hitch up into the water
Untie all the cables and rope
Step onto the AstroTurf
Or get in the Jacuzzi
Let's go
Who said any-

thing about skiin'?
Floatin's all we plan to do
You can dance to the music
Just don't rock the boat while Jon barbecues
On the pontoon...

A small Jacuzzi tub was dropped into the middle of a platform complete with AstroTurf, barbecue, umbrella, American flag and rubber duckies. We added some chairs, filled the tub with water, and loaded on a cooler of soda and snacks. We were ready for the concert. The guys fired up the barbecue (which also doubled as the secondary water heater) and started motoring across the marina to where the Brewers Grade Band was starting to play.

My sister and I followed on paddleboards. People were gathered in sailboats, big floaties, ski boats, pontoons, kayaks, and some just floating in life jackets. "Sweet Home Alabama" echoed across the water to much toe-tapping, head-bobbing and all around splashing. Definitely a great day to be alive. Jonathon barbecued while the rest of us lazed around soak-

ing up the sun and music.
Bass-trackers, Bayliners and a hot-tub barge
Strung together like a floatin' trailer park
Anchored out and gettin' loud as the concert plays on.
Side by side, there's five of us soaking our toes
AstroTurf, lawn chairs and tiki torches
Regular Joes rockin' the boat, that's us
The Redneck Yacht Club

The concert eventually came to an end, but not before Jonathon had received several offers to buy his redneck hot tub boat. Motoring back to the dock in the moonlight, the buzz of the last concert notes still ringing in our head, we were all wearing pretty big smiles.

The hot tub boat was a success. So redneck. So fun. But if I know my husband and Jonathon, this is only the beginning. Before they had finished tying it up, they were already calling it "Prototype 1," with plans for next year's boat to make even more waves in a no-wake zone!

I got my toes in the hot tub, arms getting tanned
Not a worry in the world, listening to a good band
Life is good today... life is good today...

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the farmer's fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Let's trust women to make decisions

To the Editor:

Earlier this year, the remnants of a wanted pregnancy left my body. It was a lengthy and brutal miscarriage. It's a loss I grieve, yet I wholeheartedly trust the wisdom of my body — something was wrong, so it didn't take.

For most of our history, humans capable of pregnancy, and the wise women and healers who cared for them, considered miscarriage, menstruation, and abortion one and the same. Herbs and tinctures were given with care to support those struggling to grow a family and those who, for whatever reason, needed to end a pregnancy.

Jia Tolentino shares in a thorough New Yorker article: "Ancient records of abortifacient medicine are plentiful; ancient attempts to regulate abortion are rare. What regulations existed reflect concern with women's behavior, not with fetal life. The early Christian Church opposed abortion not as an act of murder but because of its association with sexual sin. The Bible offers ambiguous guidance on the question of when life begins: Genesis 2:7 arguably implies that it begins at first breath; Exodus 12:22-24 suggests that, in Old Testament law, a fetus was not considered a person."

It wasn't until the Black Death wiped out much of the population and the first slave ships sailed with human cargo that the church and state began to wage deliberate campaigns to force women to give birth.

The beliefs some people hold about fetal personhood did not arise from faith. Its roots lie in the desire to repopulate the human race after a plague, alongside the same dehuman-

America needs a course correction

To the Editor:

To Mr. Biden and company: Remember the old saying, "I want my kids and grandkids to have it better than I did."

Well, as of right now, I'm worried about them having a life as good as the one I have had. This country is in a state of decay and you, Mr. Biden, and your followers are responsible.

China knows it, and two more years of this and we are toast! Today is July Fourth. Please think about how things are and how we got here.

Pull your head out of the sand and change this horrible path we are headed down.

On days like this I wonder what the guys who ran up the beach at Normandy or the ones at Okinawa would think of the way things have turned out. I've got a pretty good guess!

Eddy L. Negus
Prairie City

Malheur decision is a real turkey

To the Editor:

The United States Department of Agriculture is part of our federal government, and the U.S. Forest Service is a branch and part of that department.

The job of the Forest Service, according to its motto and pledge, is to "care for the land and serve the people." The national forests belong to the people. All the people.

It is not the job of the Forest Service to select or choose any NGO (non-governmental organization) to manage our national forests. The Malheur National Forest has done this by selecting the National Wild Turkey Federation to manage the Starr Aspen Timber Sale.

I must ask, is the NWTF a branch of the USDA or an outside NGO? Any NGO selected to manage our national forests sets a precedent and opens a Pandora's box difficult to close.

Which special interest group (NGO) may be next? Defenders of Wildlife? Protagonists of Canis lupus?

Michael R. Christensen
John Day

Latest local lunacy is a head-scratcher

To the Editor:

Last April, backing out of the Chamber parking lot, I bumped into a boulder. Guy comes running over, yells that I hit his car. He was parked 20 feet away in the street on the other side of a rock garden!

No physical investigation by anybody. My insurance paid him \$1,600. Their accident reconstruction expert agreed from an office in Baker. State of Oregon rubber-stamped it. Local police won't touch it after the fact. DMV Fraud doesn't answer their phone.

Richard Colbeth
John Day

WHERE TO WRITE

GRANT COUNTY

- **Grant County Courthouse** — 201 S. Humbolt St., Suite 280, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0059. Fax: 541-575-2248.
- **Canyon City** — P.O. Box 276, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0509. Fax: 541-575-0515. Email: tocc1862@centurylink.net.
- **Dayville** — P.O. Box 321, Dayville 97825. Phone: 541-987-2188. Fax: 541-987-2187. Email: dville@ortelco.net
- **John Day** — 450 E. Main St, John Day, 97845. Phone: 541-575-0028. Fax: 541-575-1721. Email: cityjd@centurytel.net.
- **Long Creek** — P.O. Box 489, Long Creek 97856. Phone: 541-421-3601. Fax: 541-421-3075. Email: info@cityoflongcreek.com.
- **Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: cityofmonument@centurytel.net.
- **Mt. Vernon** — P.O. Box 647, Mt. Vernon 97865. Phone: 541-932-4688. Fax: 541-932-4222. Email: cmtv@ortelco.net.
- **Prairie City** — P.O. Box 370, Prairie City 97869. Phone: 541-820-3605. Fax: 820-3566. Email: pchall@ortelco.net.
- **Seneca** — P.O. Box 208, Seneca 97873.

Phone and fax: 541-542-2161. Email: senecaoregon@gmail.com.

SALEM

- **Gov. Kate Brown, D** — 254 State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-378-3111. Fax: 503-378-6827. Website: governor.state.or.us/governor.html.
- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: 503-986-1180. Website: leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313, oregonlegislature.gov.
- **Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale** — 900 Court St. NE, S-301, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1730. Website: oregonlegislature.gov/findley. Email: sen.lynnfindley@oregonlegislature.gov.
- **Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane** — 900 Court St. NE, H-475, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. District address: 258 S. Oregon St., Ontario OR 97914. District phone: 541-889-8866. Website: oregonlegislature.gov/findley. Email: rep.markowens@oregonlegislature.gov.



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EditorBennett Hall, bhall@bmeagle.com
ReportersSteven Mitchell, steven@bmeagle.com
 Justin Davis, jdavis@bluemountaineagle.com
Sportssports@bmeagle.com
Page DesignerRandy Wright, rwright@eomediagroup.com
Marketing RepKim Kell, ads@bmeagle.com
Office AssistantAlexandra Hand, office@bmeagle.com

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