

WATER IN THE AMERICAN WEST



16 JULY 2018 • SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN • BLUE IS GOLD

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Water is the driving force in nature.”
— Leonardo da Vinci

NEWS: CAUGHT IN THE CURRENT

COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY THREATENS FARMERS’ FUTURES. U.S. and Canadian officials wrestle with [water rights](#). In 2024, the [Columbia River Treaty](#) will expire. Officials are negotiating in D.C. this summer. This treaty will enrich or hurt Columbia Basin farmers and affect the economy.

TRUMP PARDONS OREGON RANCHERS FOR ARSON. For decades, the [Hammonds](#)—ranchers from Burns, Oregon—feuded with federal agencies over water rights. In 2016, anger escalated to violence involving arson and arms. But halfway through their prison sentence, the Hammonds received Trump’s pardon.

EUGENE RIVERFRONT MAKEOVER. On July 9, city councilors approved a partnership with a private developer to transform the Willamette riverfront into a 16-acre neighborhood and plaza. The [\\$100 million project](#) has popular support, but critics are concerned that the 75-unit affordable housing complex included will leave the classy riverside district with an aftertaste of poverty.

DROUGHT CRISIS DEEPENING. Across the west, rural communities thirst for rain. In [central Oregon](#), cattle ranchers worry that their animals will die without water.

FIRE DANGER INTENSIFYING. The state Department of Forestry has declared Lane, Linn, and Douglas counties in [high risk of fire danger](#) because of the drought.

GET INVOLVED: BE AN H2O HERO

QUENCH THE FLAME. [Support local fire fighters](#) or join their team.

LEARN MORE: CHASE YOUR CURIOSITY

RIVERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT. Learn more about the [downtown riverfront neighborhood](#) coming to Eugene.

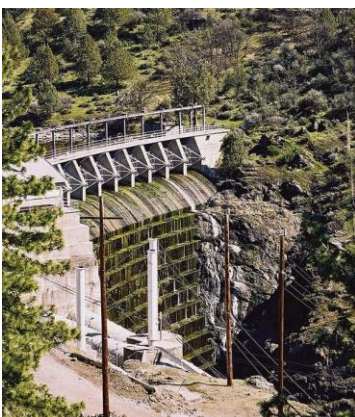


EWEB/City of Eugene

EVENTS: WATER YOU DOING THURSDAY?

PUBLIC MEETING. A three-acre park is part of the Master Plan for the new Downtown Riverfront. Enjoy refreshments and see potential designs. [Thursday, July 19 at 5:30 – 7:00 PM](#) at EWEB North Headquarters Community Room.

OPINION: THE GREAT WATER DEBATE



Copco Dam: Associated Press

DAM REMOVAL ON THE KLAMATH RIVER

The [largest dam removal task in U.S. history](#), set for 2020, is provoking controversy. Removal of four major dams on the Klamath River will have tremendous consequences.

[E. Werner Reschke](#), State Representative, HD 56, is concerned that dam removal will create 14 square miles of toxic mud, cost \$4.5 billion, cause environmental damage, and destroy recreational lake use. “The vast ecological damage that would occur is unconscionable,” he said. He warned that the project might be “the most devastating man-made disaster even witnessed in the U.S. at worst.”

Former Oregon Governor [Ted Kulongoski](#) is in favor of removing the dams. He argues that reservoir sediments aren't toxic, benefits outweigh expenses, and the project will promote a healthier

environment and fish population. “I am confident that the benefits that will come from dam removal will enhance our local communities, their economies and our environment,” he said.

“DEQ understands that dam removal will temporarily lower water quality,” said [Chris Stein](#), hydroelectric specialist. But the long-term benefits, he argued, would be worth it.

INTERVIEW: BETH MYERS, LAB DIRECTOR AT WATERLAB

Sierra Dawn McClain

OREGON’S CYANOBACTERIA CRISIS

“If the algae get out of hand, we’re in a desperate situation.”

Beth Myers, Lab Director at WaterLab Corporation, worries that Oregonians are blind to the severity of the cyanobacteria crisis. In late June, water tests revealed that some Oregon lakes had reached toxic levels.

“We’re working in parts per trillion,” Myers explained. “Even the tiniest amount can be highly toxic. We’re looking for a drop in a reservoir.”

In a seesaw of conflicting reports, Oregon Health Advisory issued and lifted alerts nine times within a month for Salem’s Detroit Lake.

Myers explained that algae testing is a complex process. Oregon currently has no accredited labs. “We don’t do it here,” Myers said. “It’s a really exotic process. This isn’t incubation overnight.”

Water samples have to be sent to Texas or Ohio, with the only EPA accredited labs. “The Great Lakes are so algae contaminated people joke you can walk across them,” Myers said. “But Oregon’s algae problem is serious too.”

The process is slow. “You know that old adage, ‘you can get it fast, cheap, or accurate?’ That’s the way water lab testing is,” said Myers. The process involves algae collection, six to eight hours of preparation, processing and packaging before samples are sent. Receiving results can take weeks.

Recognizing inefficiencies, OHA launched new protocol in late June. “OHA has a lot of work to do, but I think they’ve done pretty darn well educating the public and raising standards. It’s not easy.”

Myers thinks Oregon has a long way to go. “Cyanobacteria have infested Oregon water for decades, possibly,” she said. Myers thinks Oregon needs to take action.

“Oregonians claim to be environmentalists, but we treat water contamination like we don’t care. We need algae specialists and an accredited system. We can’t ignore our most basic human need – water.”



Anna Reed/Statesman Journal