

WATER IN THE AMERICAN WEST



9 JULY 2018 • SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN • BLUE IS GOLD

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water."
Loren Eiseley

NEWS: CAUGHT IN THE CURRENT

GOING UNDERGROUND. To combat drought, the California Water Commission will invest \$7.5 billion in water storage this summer. Water specialist Ellen Hanak argues that California should give up dams in favor of [aquifers](#), underground rock beds.

DAREDEVILS DIE IN WATERFALL. Megan Scrapper, Ryker Gamble, and Alexey Lyakh—popular YouTube stars from the channel High on Life—[plummeted to their deaths](#) over the 100-foot Shannon Falls on July 3. Internet debate exploded. Many expressed sympathy; others criticized stunts for clicks as a reckless waste of life.

WASHINGTON WATER COST RISING. Water isn't free. West coasters face water shortages and [climbing utility bills](#). On July 6, the Washington Water Service proposed upgraded water systems and higher prices.

ALGAE CRISIS WORSENING. [Deadly blue-green algae](#) are in full bloom. Oregon state health officials are requiring over a dozen Lane County water providers to test for toxins.

DEBRIS IN THE DESCHUTES. Every summer, a quarter of a million people swim and float the Deschutes River. Under the surface, the riverbed is a [graveyard of trash](#), debris, and lost items, threatening the ecosystem.

GET INVOLVED: BE AN H2O HERO

CLEAN THE DESCHUTES! Get wet for a good cause. Bring your canoe, paddleboard, or kayak to help divers pull garbage out of the river for the [22nd Annual Deschutes River Cleanup](#) on July 28.

OPINION: A TAIL OF TWO ENDANGERED SPECIES



Thomas Boyd/The Oregonian

KILLING SEA LIONS TO PROTECT SALMON

In late June, the U.S. House of Representatives passed [House Resolution 2083](#), allowing fisheries and tribal officials to kill 930 sea lions a year on the Columbia to protect endangered salmon.

IN SUPPORT

"Our salmon runs are now fighting for survival. It's practically a miracle when a fish can make it upstream without getting caught between a sea lion's teeth," says [Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler](#), R-Wa., legislative co-sponsor.

"We've got to get over the 'fuzzy' factor," says [Noah Oppenheim](#), director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, "Sea lions are charismatic and well loved; they are also recovered. Salmon are nearing extinction."

"This year we've gone out three times and caught two fish. [Sea lions] basically harass [schools of salmon] into areas we can't access," bemoans [Kelly Dirksen](#), Native Tribal Fish and Wildlife Manager.

IN OPPOSITION

"[Sea lions] are not the biggest consumers of fish," points out [Naomi Rose](#) of the Animal Welfare Institute. "We are."

[Sharon Young](#), marine wildlife director for The Humane Society, dubs the measure a "draconian solution" and "a complete distraction from dealing with the actual problems facing the fish."

"The killing of sea lions is not a silver bullet for a salmon recovery," argues [Congressman Raúl Grijalva](#), D-Ariz., "This bill is a 5-cent solution to a \$10 problem."

LEARN MORE: CHASE YOUR CURIOSITY

VISIT A FISH HATCHERY. The [Bonneville Hatchery](#) protects the declining Columbia fish population. Explore scenic fish ponds, feed the fish, and enjoy the beautiful area.

SEE THE SEA LIONS. For \$14, take a trip to [America's largest sea cave](#), year-round home of sea lions in Florence, Oregon. For a free trip, head north half to [Neptune State Scenic Viewpoint](#), where sea lions and harbor seals sun themselves on the rocks.

EVENTS: WATER YOU DOING TOMORROW?

PICNIC AND PADDLEBOARDING. Tuesday, July 10, the [University of Oregon Outdoor Program](#) is heading to Fern Ridge Reservoir for a fun afternoon. Bring \$15 to the pre-trip session today at 4:00.

INTERVIEW: KRISTI MOOMEY, WHITEWATER RIVER GUIDE



Sierra Dawn McClain/Water in the American West

JUST MORE RIVER TIME: PLUGGED OUT, TUNED IN

“I fall off the back, and I go to the bottom of the river while my mother gets trapped under the raft.”

After a traumatizing experience in her youth, Kristi Moomey, 55 and from Eugene, never thought she would set foot in water again. But fear didn’t stop her. Today, a rafting guide for [Freeman River Sports](#), she has been paddling the McKenzie River for 20 years.

“There’s something about the river,” she says.

Moomey thinks rafting deepens relationships. “Five hours on the McKenzie equals six months on dry land for getting to know people,” she quips. “You’ve got to work as a team, or it can be dangerous.”

In a fast paced, digitalized world, Moomey believes people have lost the ability to connect in real ways—and water can bring them back together. “People are more plugged in now than ever, but they’re ironically more tuned out,” she says. “River time is so necessary because people are multitasking all the time. And there, you’re just in the moment. You’re alive.”

What are the challenges of being a river guide? “Gosh, what are the downsides?” she laughs. “I don’t get enough. Just more river time, please.”