

Legislative Committee Meetings

One thing reemphasized this week during the Legislative meetings, the Legislative Majority leaders do not have a very high regard for, or understanding of, business and economic development in Oregon. The Legislature scheduled a three day series of committee meetings from May 24-26th. Most meetings scheduled only included information and reports from invited individuals, groups, organizations and government agencies or entities. Some highlights below:

- House Interim Committee On Agriculture, Natural Resources & Rural Communities: Invited Jim Beers, Retired USF&WS biologist, to provide History of Wolf Reintroduction and Diseases. Invited ODF&W to provide update on Oregon Conservation Strategy.
- House Interim Committee On Environment & Water and Senate Interim Environment & Natural Resources: Invited updates for Umatilla Project, Pesticide Issues, Ecosystem Markets Work Group, and Climate Change.
- House Interim Committee On Business & Labor: Chair Schaufler invited numerous groups to provide information on What State Government Can Do to Generate Job Creation: Perspectives from Business and Labor Leaders.
- House Committee On Sustainability & Economic Development: Invited testimony on Electric Vehicles, Statewide Energy Plan, Energy Efficiency, Green Supply Chain, and Pacific NorthWest Economic Region.
- House and Senate Interim Committees on Transportation: Invited updates on Port of Portland, and Transportation Investment in Oregon.
- Senate Interim Committee On Veterans' Affairs: Informational meetings on Tricare, Veterans Transportation, Women Veterans Health Care, and Reintegration Task Force.

Agency Budgets: More Fee Increases

The natural resource agencies have been holding stakeholder meetings involving their budgets addressing the anticipated General Fund shortfall due to the continuing recession. The Governor instructed the agencies to prepare budgets with present biennium reductions continuing and budgets with reductions of up to 25%. As of May 25th he has requested a 9% across the board reduction for all agencies to relieve the burden on the remaining biennium.

The deliberations are once again involving recommendations, by agencies, for General Fund revenue to be replaced with fee increases. Ag and natural resource industries have made the point that a number of the programs that they participate in are required by law and rule, and were developed for public purposes and should therefore be funded by the General Fund, not fees assessed the producers. **Those of us close to the budget process have suggested there should be reduction or elimination of non-essential budget items and administration to help reduce the agency budgets without the assessment of more and higher fees.**

Wolves

- The Oregon Cattlemen's Association (OCA) and Eastern Oregon University Range Club hosted a Wolf Symposium May 22, in La Grande. The Symposium was aptly scheduled with May being a bad month for wolf predation in eastern Oregon. The keynote speakers were

Jim Beers and Casey Anderson who provided more information about what to expect as the wolves grow in population and move across the state.

- The Cattlemen attended the Oregon Hunters Association (OHA) Board meeting at Seven Feathers Casino Saturday May 15th to discuss a common approach to dealing with wolf predation in Oregon. There was heightened interest from OHA board members and a commitment to work together in the future.
- The Cattlemen and other stakeholders are preparing their recommendations, for the Fish & Wildlife Commission, on the five year review of the Wolf Conservation Plan. The OCA Wolf Committee will have some very significant recommendations now that they have experienced wolf predation and Wolf Plan implementation first hand.
- **It is becoming obvious to cattle producers and others that the Oregon Wolf Conservation Plan is woefully inadequate for protecting the producer. As predicted five years ago by the Cattlemen and OSG's Ben Boswell the "Wolf Plan Minority Report" was the document needed to help protect the livestock producers in Oregon.**

Water Study

The IWRS (Integrated Water Resources Study) process includes another statewide meeting scheduled for Burns on May 25th. Water for Life has been leading the effort addressing the Oregon Water Resource Department process as directed by the Legislature for HB 3369. The process raises many questions as to the eventual outcome of the exercise. The water of the state and their beneficial uses are important to all of us and any changes can put at risk those uses necessary for agriculture, or any other beneficial uses on the list. If in-stream uses become over prioritized we are in trouble. **Most everyone watching the IWRS process are concerned about outcomes and the precarious balance that we have been able to maintain for years in Oregon concerning beneficial uses.**

For example, the EFTAG (Ecological Flow Technical Advisory Group) within the IWRS and charged with defining "Peak and Ecological Flow" is made up of individuals who have no connection to water delivery, water management, irrigation districts, or more importantly agricultural interests. So, you see the concern with the outcomes of the IWRS process.

Pesticides (P3) and Water

DEQ and the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission (OEQC) developed a parallel process addressing point source pollution and non-point pollution with their eye on the P3 list of pollutants identified and published in 2009 as directed by SB 737 of 2007. **The agriculture and natural resource industries are very concerned with the direction OEQC Chair Blossor has taken by indicating he wants to regulate non-point source land owners more in respect to a list of chemicals on the P3 list.** Some of the chemicals on the list have been reported to show up in fish. The OEQC is concerned that a certain population eats 22 meals of fish pre month. So, they would like to resolve this problem by restricting the use of certain chemicals. The Ag and Natural Resource Coalition is preparing a response and further action as OEQC has prepared rules changes affecting Water Quality Management and the 1010 process.

Navigability

Secretary of State, Kate Brown scheduled the first "Water Users" work group meeting recently. There are at least 25 participants representing recreation, fishing, and land owners. The first

meeting was organized to outline the most acceptable issues where common ground might be found. Secretary Brown removed from the table for consideration the legislation proposed in the 2010 Special Session. The participants were moved into smaller working groups to discuss these topics pertaining to the issue:

- Definition of public use
- Definitions of floatable and navigable to understand the waterways impacted
- Lakes
- Portage problems and when it should be used
- Enforcement / management of eventual laws
- Liability of landowners if river users are injured while on the property
- Conservation / preservation / stewardship / management / taxes for this and who pays

The next meeting is scheduled for June 4th.

Animal Care & Welfare

The work group met again to review proposed draft language to address future animal rights legislation if it should be introduced in the Legislature. The proposed draft was met with many questions and even outright opposition. The proposal outlined the establishment of a board or commission of appointed livestock specialists and scientists to review agency rules and legislation dealing with livestock care and welfare. They would prepare a report for the Legislature and Legislative committee addressing the issue. The disapproval was due to the provision allowing the Governor, and House and Senate Leaders to make the appointments, indicating that the appointments could very well be biased and political. Even the Board of Agriculture is seen as a biased and potentially political group by some. **It is obvious there will be difficulty selecting a process that will be acceptable within the livestock industries represented, and then the challenge of receiving the acceptance of the Legislature and Governor.**

Agriculture Reformation Act

Not to be taken lightly, the Agriculture Reformation Act (ARA), is the brainchild of Friends of Family Farms here in Oregon. The so called group is made up of a handful of environmental activists with the intent, it seems, to affect agriculture as it is represented or influenced by “Corporate” agriculture. The legislative intentions of the ARA have not been revealed by the “Friends” and there are no legislative drafts available. This may soon change as the Board of Agriculture has the “Friends” invited to update them in June.

Ballot Measures Proposed: Signatures Sought

- **Initiative 50:** Amends Constitution and transfers legislative redistricting responsibility following census from legislature to new appointed commission of retired judges.
- **Initiative 66:** Amends Constitution and requires voter approval of taxes and fees on motor vehicle use, ownership, fuel; limited retroactivity. (This initiative is in response to SB 2001 passed during the 2009 Legislative Session).
- **There are several other proposed initiatives that the OSG will be interested in but at this time they have not made the Secretary of State reporting site.**