

Oregon

NRCS encourages no-till farming in Sherman County

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Sherman County wheat producers have until May 15 to apply for funding intended to encourage them to take up no-till farming.

A \$100,000 grant from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service will pay producers \$9.97 an acre, said Kristie Coelsch, the NRCS district conservationist in Moro, Ore.

The program is aimed at reducing erosion. Wheat is about all there is in Sherman County, and the thin soils sometimes blow off in the northern part of the county and run off in the



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Sherman County wheat grower Darren Padget, shown in this 2014 file photo, is among those trying no-till farming under an NRCS payment program.

rest. It is Columbia Plateau in the rain shadow of the Cascades, with slopes and

draws rolling down to the river. The county gets little moisture, 10 to 12 inches annually, but rain over frozen, sloping ground can take soil with it.

No-till methods increase organic matter, retain water better than bare ground and build soil health, Coelsch said. About 40 percent of the county is no-till now, and the NRCS goal is to increase that to 80 percent within five years.

Farmers are beginning to get on board, Coelsch said. "All of our producers want to be good stewards," she said. "Some don't want to be the first adopter in case it flops."

The potential drawbacks

include a drop in yield the first couple years, and no-till may require buying or renting a new seed drill to punch through the stubble. Without tillage, farmers are using more glyphosate to control weeds. The practice is likely to become more controversial, as much of the public associates glyphosate with Monsanto, Roundup Ready and GMO crops — lightning rods for critics.

Darren Padget, who farms 3,000 acres in Sherman County, said he was on the fence about no-till but decided to enroll about 1,000 acres into the program. Farmers over the decades have already tried

more traditional erosion control methods such as terracing, he said.

"It's all been done, now we're looking for the next thing," Padget said. "No-till is the next thing on the list."

Padget said glyphosate, like it or not, is necessary.

"You cannot do dryland wheat without it," he said. "The weeds take over. Without glyphosate, wind erosion and water erosion would just be huge, huge, huge."

For more information, contact the USDA's Moro Service Center, 541-565-3551, or email Coelsch at Kristie.coelsch@or.usda.gov. NRCS program information is at www.or.nrcs.usda.gov.

Oregon bill proposes predator control districts

Lawmakers are considering several predator bills

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Certain rural landowners would be subject to increased tax rates to pay for predator control under legislation being considered by Oregon lawmakers.

House Bill 3188 would allow landowners to petition counties to establish special tax districts in which properties would be assessed up to \$1 an acre to raise funds for predator control conducted by USDA's Wildlife Services.

Proponents of the bill claim it's necessary to protect the livestock industry and compensate for reduced federal timber payments to counties.

"This bill is driven by the landowners," said Rep. Dallas Heard, R-Roseburg, who sponsored the bill.

Ranchers try to use fences and guard dogs to fend off cougars, coyotes and other predators but these strategies aren't effective in all situations, said Dan Dawson, a sheep producer in Douglas County, Ore.

"Sometimes we need to target the animals that are causing the problem," he said during an April 16 hearing before the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

During an April 21 work session, the committee unanimously voted to refer the bill

to the House floor with a "do pass" recommendation.

Livestock production is a major economic contributor in rural Oregon but predators take a major toll on ranchers' profits, proponents of HB 3188 say.

"There are some areas of the ranch where we no longer run sheep" due to predation problems, said David Briggs, a rancher near Myrtle Creek, Ore.

Proponents said HB 3188 would provide a stable funding source and the special districts would be overseen by county commissioners, who would decide whether or not to approve such programs.

"This is an opt-out pro-



An adult female cougar with a malfunctioning GPS collar is treed in the Mount Emily area of Northeast Oregon so the collar can be replaced.

Courtesy of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

gram. It's not mandatory," said Ron Jort, who testified in favor of the bill.

Opponents of the legislation claim current mecha-

nisms for funding predator control are sufficient and there's no reason to add more bureaucracy to the system.

Predators do not respect

geographic boundaries and decisions about management should not be made at the local level, according to opponents.

Bill centers on conflicts between mines, farmland

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Farmers are worried that legislation will make it easier to develop mines on high-value farmland in Oregon.

Mining companies argue that House Bill 2666 will require opponents to provide objective evidence that farming practices will be adversely affected by new or expanded mines.

Obtaining permits for mines requires hiring a multitude of specialists and attorneys at great cost, but much of the arguments against mining aren't factually-based, according to proponents of HB 2666.

"We end up with boxes of conflicts we end up dealing with," said Richard Angstrom, president of the Oregon Concrete & Aggregate Producers Association.

The exact language of HB 2666 may change due to pro-

posed amendments, but proponents claim it will help counties settle clashes between agriculture and mining.

"There's got to be a process for local governments to follow to resolve the conflict," Angstrom said.

Only 2,500 acres of the 2.8 million acres of high-value farmland in Oregon's Willamette Valley — roughly one-tenth of a percent — are currently dedicated to mining, according to the association.

The Oregon Farm Bureau and several growers testified against the bill during an April 16 legislative hearing, arguing it will hinder farmers from participating in the public decision-making process.

The legislation would shift the burden of proof to farmers, who often can't hire attorneys and specialists to validate their concerns about dust, noise and traffic, said Mary Anne Nash, public policy counsel for OFB.

Farmers already must back up their arguments against mines with evidence, she said. "It does have to be more than just a bald assertion."

Aggregate producers have a 97 percent success rate in winning approval for mines, so the bill is unnecessary, she said. "We view House Bill 2666 as a solution in search of a problem."

Bruce Chapin, a hazelnut farmer near Keizer, Ore., disputed the notion that growers are too easily able to block mine development under current law.

"My observation has been just the opposite," he said. "When the miners apply, the miners get the permit no matter how much opposition."

During an April 21 work session, HB 2666 was referred to the House Rules Committee, allowing it to stay alive for further discussion.

HIGH DESERT TRAIL RIDERS BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN
28TH ANNUAL HORSE PACKING AND WILDERNESS SKILLS CLINIC

HISTORY THROUGH THE EYE OF THE EQUINE

SELECTED PHOTO PROVIDED BY KLAMATH COUNTY MUSEUM

FRI-SUN, MAY 1-3, 2015
KLAMATH COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, KLAMATH FALLS, OREGON

Oregon's Largest Educational & Interactive Equine Expo
Over 50 Seminars! Over 125 Vendors! • Silent Auction, Live Auction & Mule Auction

FRIDAY
ACTHA Obstacle Challenge (AOC)
Open to the Public
To register go to ACTHA.us
For more information call Kelly Behr at 541.892.4844 or go to hdtbrch.org and click on Pack Clinic
Beer, Wine & Cheese Tasting • 5-7 pm
Presented by Del Rio Vineyard, 12 Ranch Wines and Beer by Mia and Pie's
Auction Mules Preview

FRIDAY NIGHT
DAVE STAMEY CONCERT
with special guest **66ix Footstaps** • 7:30 pm
Reserved seating \$25 | General Seating \$20
For advance ticket sales call 541.591.0967 or 831.235.3001

SATURDAY
Silent Auction, Live Auction and Mule Auction
Saturday Evening BBQ Dinner
Presented by Melissa's Country Kitchen

17-1/#5

Clinic 541.810.3665 • Vendors 541.533.3400 • Mule Auction 541.810.3665
Presented by: High Desert Trail Riders Back Country Horsemen | www.hdtbrch.org

ARE YOU READY?

L5901
• 54.5 HP Diesel I4 • 32.5 Gallon Fuel Tank • 4500 lbs. Capacity
• 1800 mm Wheelbase • 1800 mm Ground Clearance
• 1800 mm Track • 1800 mm Tread
• 1800 mm Front End Width
• 1800 mm Rear End Width
• 1800 mm Overall Length

L6060
• 60 HP Diesel I4 • 45 Gallon Fuel Tank • 5500 lbs. Capacity
• 2000 mm Wheelbase • 2000 mm Ground Clearance
• 2000 mm Track • 2000 mm Tread
• 2000 mm Front End Width
• 2000 mm Rear End Width
• 2000 mm Overall Length

L2501
• 25 HP Diesel I4 • 15 Gallon Fuel Tank • 1500 lbs. Capacity
• 1200 mm Wheelbase • 1200 mm Ground Clearance
• 1200 mm Track • 1200 mm Tread
• 1200 mm Front End Width
• 1200 mm Rear End Width
• 1200 mm Overall Length

Z125SKH-54
• 12.5 HP Diesel I4 • 12.5 Gallon Fuel Tank • 1250 lbs. Capacity
• 1200 mm Wheelbase • 1200 mm Ground Clearance
• 1200 mm Track • 1200 mm Tread
• 1200 mm Front End Width
• 1200 mm Rear End Width
• 1200 mm Overall Length

Z725KH
• 7.25 HP Diesel I4 • 7.25 Gallon Fuel Tank • 725 lbs. Capacity
• 1200 mm Wheelbase • 1200 mm Ground Clearance
• 1200 mm Track • 1200 mm Tread
• 1200 mm Front End Width
• 1200 mm Rear End Width
• 1200 mm Overall Length

RICKREALL
Farm Supply

130 MAIN ST. • RICKREALL, OR 97371
503-623-2366 • 800-792-9900
www.rickfarm.com
Serving the Willamette Valley since 1947

Kubota

17-7/#7