

# Senators storm out of hearing

**NORTHWEST** SALEM (AP) — Two state senators marched out of a state Senate committee hearing Monday, claiming the committee chairman was trying to smear state Treasurer Tony Meeker.

Sens. Ron Grensky, R-Medford, and Jim Bunn, R-McMinnville, left one hour into the day-long session.

They claimed committee chairman Grattan Kerans was using the committee to harm Meeker politically. Meeker is running for the 1st Congressional District seat.

Kerans, a Eugene Democrat, fired back that Grensky and Bunn were "throwing up a political smokescreen to protect Mr. Meeker from what they believe would be some embarrassing questions."

The Kerans committee is investigating how the Treasury and the Oregon Investment Council have managed \$20 billion, most of which belongs to the state pension fund.

The main focus so far has been on real estate deals and the \$1.5 billion invested with the lever-

aged buyout firm Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. It was Kerans' questions to Meeker about KKR and Roger Meier, a former investment council chairman, that led to the Republicans' walkout.

According to published accounts, nine months after Meier left the investment council in March 1986, he was allowed to buy stock from KKR's private portfolio. The stock allegedly was worth far more than Meier paid. Meier has heatedly denied any wrongdoing.

Kerans repeatedly asked Meeker when he became aware of Meier's stock deal and whether Meeker looked into the matter.

Although Meier's investment didn't become public knowledge until May 1991, Kerans said reporters asked Meeker about it in 1989 and 1990.

Meeker said he did not recall the specific interviews or questions the reporters asked him. He said he may have dismissed the charge as a baseless rumor.

As Kerans grilled Meeker, Grensky loudly objected. Kerans hammered his gavel to quiet Grensky. Then Grensky and Bunn left.

# Severe drawdown not expected

UMATILLA (AP) — A plan to restore salmon runs in the Columbia and Snake rivers concludes that the John Day Reservoir won't have to be drawn down severely for at least five years.

The reservoir behind the John Day Dam is to be operated the same way it has been the last two years, with no river depth less than 262.5 feet, the report concludes. That allows irrigation pumps to continue supplying water to more than 100,000 acres of wheat, potatoes, field corn and other crops.

The plan was developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with the cooperation of the Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and National Marine Fisheries Service.

Carol Wolff, a spokeswoman for the Corps of Engineers in Walla Walla, Wash., said the plan is intended for a minimum of five years.

The John Day pool was singled out for a possible severe

drawdown because it is the longest and slackest of the reservoirs on the Columbia pools.

The idea of drawing down the reservoirs is to speed up the river's flow, making it easier for salmon to migrate to the sea.

A 45-day review will follow formal release of the draft on Friday. The plan will be the subject of nine hearings in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana.

The corps' preferred alternative includes:

-Operating the four lower Snake River reservoirs near minimum operating pool from April through July.

-Operating the John Day pool at minimum irrigation levels from May through August.

-Releasing water from Dworshak Reservoir in spring, summer and fall, and when necessary, shifting fall releases to early summer.

-Transferring flood control storage from Dworshak to Grand Coulee Dam to allow for more water storage in the

spring.

The John Day pool, which supplies irrigators in the Hermiston-Boardman area, was lowered to elevation 262.5 feet for the past two years, or 5.5 feet above the minimum level for the dam and reservoir to operate properly.


This year, the corps river management plan included a drawdown experiment at Lower Granite and Little Goose reservoirs during March. The test was designed to measure the effects of reservoir drawdowns, such as water speed, water quality and sediment movement.

The proposed level for the John Day Reservoir is the same as the level proposed in a Northwest Power Planning Council plan.

The National Marine Fisheries Service also is developing a plan to save Snake River salmon under the Endangered Species Act. The agency can overrule both the corps and the council.

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# High-speed trains may travel Northwest

PORTLAND (AP) — Passenger trains could be traveling at speeds up to 125 to 150 mph between Vancouver, British Columbia and Eugene, as a result of federal action announced Tuesday.

The route would pass through Seattle, Portland and other Northwest communities.

Federal Railroad Administrator Gil Carmichael announced the designation of the high-speed rail corridor at Union Station in downtown Portland.

He made no apologies for making the announcement just two weeks before the presidential election.

"It's a smart time to announce it. There's nothing wrong with that," Carmichael said. "The fact it coincides with the election is I hope beneficial to the president."

The corridor is the fourth of five to be designated by the federal government. Those previously announced are from San Diego and Los Angeles to Oakland and Sacramento; from Detroit to Chicago, St. Louis and Milwaukee; from Washington to Charlotte, N.C., and from Miami to Tampa.

High-speed rail lines already exist from Washington to New York and Boston and across upstate New York from Buffalo to Albany and New York City.

"We are now looking at a beginning of a national high-speed rail network," Carmichael said, "and you're right in the forefront of it."

Under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, signed by President Bush last December, Oregon and Washington each will receive \$250,000 for safety improvements at grade crossings or other actions to develop the line.

The federal government plans to spend \$30 million on the five corridors over the next six years.

Much of the cost will go to eliminate grade crossings to allow the trains to pass at high speeds. Mechanical crossings would be added to improve safety at other sites.

Carmichael said there are 475 grade crossings along the 464-mile route.

"I'll make you a dollar bet that 25 percent of those crossings are redundant, that you could eliminate 25 percent of them with a bulldozer in a few minutes," he said.

Don Forbes, director of the Oregon Department of Transportation, wants to complete the Oregon portion of the line within six years, but he admitted that may be optimistic.

Preliminary studies indicate the Oregon portion would cost \$450 million, Forbes said. The money would come from federal, state and private funds.

Private freight lines own the Northwest right-of-way and are enthusiastic about high-speed passenger service, Carmichael said.

Forbes admitted the Legislature might be preoccupied with other issues next year as it deals with the restrictions of the property tax limit, Measure 5. But he expects lawmakers to seriously consider the high-speed rail proposal.

"People will not stop moving to Oregon because of Measure 5," Forbes said.

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