

Lack of feeding ground starving elk, deer

By Chester Allen
Emerald Reporter



Bob Harrell says his electric fence will shock a man off his feet, but it can't stop 200 starving elk. Each night, the elk knock down the fence and shoulder their way through Harrell's herd of Hereford bulls to eat the only food they can find for miles around.

"These elk are so hungry, they don't respect an electric fence or fear man," said Harrell, a Baker Valley rancher. "My bulls eat on one side of the trough, and the elk are on the other."

A deadly combination of record snowfall and ranchers' takeover of vital winter range will cause about 9,000 elk and 75,000 deer to die of starvation and disease in Eastern Oregon this winter, said Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists.

Elk and deer in the mountains are unable to scrape through the deep snow to find grass and brush to eat, which forces them to migrate to lower elevations to find food, said ODFW biologist Jack Kemp.

"Historically, the elk and deer moved off the Elkhorn mountains to winter range on the Grande Ronde Valley floor," said Kemp. "But now all that winter range is ranch land, and the animals have no place to go."

Once they arrive on the ranch land, the hungry animals break into haystacks and invade feedlots, eating expensive cattle feed and angering ranchers, Kemp said.

ODFW traps animals eating ranchers' feed stocks and moves them to wildlife feeding areas, where they are fed alfalfa hay until the end of winter.

This winter ODFW has trapped more than 2,700 elk and deer and taken them to the Elkhorn Wildlife Refuge, where they are fed 3,500 pounds of hay a night, Kemp said.

"I've been here for 28 years, and this is the most feeding we've ever had to do," Kemp said. "Every district in Eastern Oregon is feeding animals, but we're still going to lose about 30 percent of our deer and 20 percent of our elk to starvation."

Although some animals are being saved, ranchers and biologists said the trapping and feed-

ing program treats only the symptoms, not the cause of the problem.

Ranchers in the Baker and Grande Ronde valleys said ODFW should allow hunters to kill more deer and elk, reducing the number of animals needing to use winter range.

Ranchers should be given free deer and elk hunting tags, which they could use to sell hunters guided deer and elk hunts on their ranches, said Baker Valley rancher Bob Harrell.

"We feed the animals all winter," Harrell said. "We should have the right to make a little money from them and reduce the overpopulation problem at the same time."

ODFW wildlife biologists said a severe shortage of deer and elk winter range, not overpopulation, is causing the problem.

Although deer and elk populations sharply increased during the past few mild winters, ODFW surveys show the animals only need more low-altitude wintering grounds to survive, said ODFW biologist Dick Humphries.

"They're doing fine when we have an easy winter," Humphries said. "But when there's several

feet of snow on the ground in the mountains, they need to get down on the valley floors to find food."

Until more winter range is provided, massive die-offs of deer and elk will occur during years of heavy snowfall, Humphries said.

"The young and old animals die first," Humphries said. "What's scary this year is we're losing some of the big prime bull elk, which are the toughest animals in Eastern Oregon."

ODFW is exploring ways to get more winter range for the animals, but it will be a long, expensive process, Humphries said.

Meanwhile, like it or not, ODFW and area ranchers will continue to feed deer and elk during hard winters.

Rancher Bob Harrell said he doesn't mind feeding some elk, but with hay at \$90 a ton, he'd like ODFW to pay some of his costs.

"I don't mind feeding them; ranchers have to assume some responsibility for their situation," Harrell said. "But feeding 200 elk a day is pretty damn expensive."

House wants to end land development conflict

SALEM (AP) — Oregon House Republicans have given early and forceful notice that they want the 1993 Legislature to resolve a lingering controversy over rural land development.

Oregon's reputation as a social innovator is built in large part on the land-use planning law adopted 20 years ago. Using statewide guidelines, counties and cities have drawn up plans for orderly and efficient urban development.

Rules also protect agriculture and timber, Oregon's two biggest industries, by controlling rural development. But until recently, development on the least productive farmland and timberland was bound by the same rules controlling development of prime tracts.

The Land Conservation and Development Commission adopted new rural development rules in December. The rules loosen restrictions on developing "small-scale resource lands," property that until now had been referred to as "secondary lands." Restrictions on developing the best farmland and timberland are tightened.

The new rules have only increased discontent. Opponents say the state retains too much control over local land-use decisions. Advocates of state planning, led by 1000 Friends of Oregon, accuse the state commis-

'In our wildest dreams, we'll never be Southern California.'

Bob Repine,
Representative, Grants Pass

sion of appeasing county planning directors and developers.

The Legislature has tried to resolve the dispute before, with no success. But this session, Republicans from mostly rural backgrounds who control the House appear determined to prevail. They are set against Senate Democrats from mostly urban districts who have long been champions of state planning. Gov. Barbara Roberts, a Democrat from Portland, says she will veto any land-use planning reform that gives away too much.

Reviews of the new rules had barely begun when Rep. Ray Baum, a La Grande Republican who heads the House Natural Resources Committee, issued the first threat. He said he would block the budget of the Department of Land Conservation and Development unless satisfactory secondary lands rules were signed

into law by the governor.

The department oversees implementation of state planning guidelines. If the agency does not get a budget, the state rules will remain in place. But there will be no staff to run the program.

Holding the agency's budget hostage is not a new tactic. But such a direct threat so early in the session is unusual.

Baum said urban dwellers who don't own significant property "are the ones who have been calling the shots controlling how people in rural parts of the state can manage their property. To me, it's undemocratic."

Rep. Bob Repine, a Republican building contractor from Grants Pass, said the agency had kept too much control over local planning for too long. After 20 years of state land-use planning, he said, more trust should be placed in county commissioners to implement the law. Repine said state planners should shift their focus, developing a vision for how Oregon should look years into the future.

"That's the part of the cycle that has not been completed," he said.

But county commissioners cannot be trusted to make the right decisions when their friends and neighbors are the developers, said Blair Batson of 1,000 Friends.

BIRR

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department are complete until the reporter talks to Birr.

At the time Hall selected Birr, fire departments around the nation were getting bad press for not hiring enough minorities. The Eugene fire department's relationship with the local media was suffering from a different problem. The department was in the news a lot and the higher-ranking officers didn't work well with the media, Birr said.

"It was a hands-off relationship," he said. "The media was told to stay across the street at fire scenes, and few people would talk to them."

Hall drafted Birr in an effort to improve the department's relationship with the media. Birr was made the department's part-time information officer in addition to his other firefighting responsibilities.

However, Birr, now the primary spokesman for the Eugene Department of Public Safety, is

not the average public relations man. He said most of the people in his field have some public relations education.

Despite his lack of experience, Birr said he was glad to become the fire department's information officer in 1979.

The public did not see firefighting as Birr saw it in *Report from Engine Co. No. 82*. He said people didn't understand even basic firefighting procedures.

"We would cut holes in the roofs of buildings, and people would think it was destructive," he said. "They didn't understand we had to ventilate the building to put the fire out."

Birr said when buildings are not ventilated, the heat and smoke from a fire will build at the highest point until the fire bursts out of control. If there is ventilation, the temperature and smoke are released, and the fire is manageable.

After becoming part-time information officer in 1979, Birr juggled his time between fighting fires and dealing with the media. He was interviewed by

the local media at the firehouse and wrote press releases at an old, beat-up metal desk at the fire station.

The city manager noticed Birr's work and wanted him as the public information director for the city of Eugene. So in 1984, Birr made the switch to politics.

It didn't take Birr long to show he had a knack for politics. After a short time on the job, Birr had to diffuse a public relations nightmare.

Birr was waiting outside the Valley River Inn for a bus full of representatives from Kakegawa, Japan, a sister city of Eugene. When he entered the hotel lobby to make sure everything was ready, Birr looked up and saw a huge banner that read, "Welcome Pearl Harbor Survivors."

Apparently the hotel had scheduled the group from Kakegawa and a group of Pearl Harbor survivors for the same night. Birr quickly got the hotel staff to take the banner down before the Japanese delegation arrived. Once the travel-weary

group from Japan arrived, they went to bed and the banner was put back up. Neither group found out about the presence of the other.

After working for the city manager, Birr was offered his current position in 1986 when Eugene merged its police and fire departments. He said he took the job because, like his two previous public relations positions, it was something new, and he wanted to see if he could do it.

Now, after seven years on the job, Birr believes he made the right decision.

"The positive feedback I get gives me the sense that I'm in the right place," he said.

Many of the people who have worked with Birr, now 39, agree he is in the right place.

Janelle Hartman, a *Register-Guard* reporter, said Birr is good at his job because he has the firefighter's mentality to help and serve the public. She said Birr's personality and willingness to help relaxes tension between the media and the office of public safety.

Law school mentors will call students

By Sarah Clark
Emerald Reporter

About 20 law students will be calling undergraduate students of color during March and April to help those interested in going to law school do so, said Jane Gordon, law school assistant dean.

The calls are part of a mentor program the law school has for sophomores, juniors and seniors of color, Gordon said. Depending on how interested an undergraduate is in law school, the law student making the call could become the undergraduate's mentor, she said.

The law students will tell undergraduates how to apply to law school, how to get financial aid for law school and other information they may need to pursue a law degree, said University law student Shawn Burnett, one of the mentor program's coordinators.

"Unless they happen to have mentors they can go to, a lot of students are lost," Gordon said.

Burnett said law school intimidated her when she was an undergraduate student. She said the purpose of the calls is to make undergraduates more comfortable with law school.

"It's important to demystify law school to students of color," Burnett said.

Gordon said she'd like to see more people of color practicing law in Oregon. Currently, about 5 percent of Oregonians are people of color, but only 2.5 percent of Oregon attorneys are people of color, Gordon said.

But undergraduates interested in studying law out-of-state can also participate in the mentor program, Burnett said.

If undergraduates express interest in other graduate degrees, such as business, the law students will give their names to those departments.

At a recent police news conference, Birr's skills were apparent. Before the cameras rolled, he worked the room. He knew everyone's first name and greeted them with a smile and a press release.

As people waited for the news conference to begin, Birr lightened the mood by joking with the officers and members of the media. The two groups, usually known as adversaries, seemed to be eased by his presence.

Once things got started, Birr sat quietly in the corner as the event he had orchestrated ran smoothly. The police had reopened an investigation of a 15-year-old homicide, and they were hoping media coverage would jog the community's memory and produce some new leads.

When the news conference ended, both the police and the media were happy. The police got their information out, and the media got an interesting story.

Tim Birr has done his job — a job he never planned on having.