

Oregon delegation split on forest bill

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Lawmakers and activists stand divided on how to balance environmental protection, stewardship and business enterprise, as well as fire prevention. ZACH URNESS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

A bill reshaping federal forest land management passed the U.S. House of Representatives Wednesday, splitting Oregon's delegation on the vote and underscoring their disagreement on how best to prevent dangerous and expensive wildfires.

Not only is there a long-standing debate among lawmakers and activists on how best to balance environmental protection, stewardship and business enterprise, but they also disagree on which step of fire prevention comes first: funding or management.

The Resilient Federal Forests Act addresses the latter, focusing on expedited approval of logging by loosening some environmental regulations.

Two Oregon delegates, bill co-sponsor Republican Rep. Greg Walden and Democratic Rep. Kurt Schrader, voted for the legislation, praising it for providing flexibility to the forest service in fighting fires and giving more access for salvage logging after a large fire.

"Bottom line is what we're doing now is obviously not working," Schrader said. "This bill was a significant step forward."

Fires burned more than 678,000 acres across the state in 2017, much of it on federal land. Nationally, wildfires killed dozens and cost around \$2.9 billion to fight, a record amount for one year.

"We can reduce the size and intensity of fire up to 70 percent if we do the kinds of projects that thin out the forests and allow us to better manage and be better stewards of our federal forests," Walden said in a statement.

Schrader said it is important that funds be there to adequately fight fires, but better front-end management is needed.

The Oregon lawmakers who voted no fell more on the funding and environmental side of the arguments.

"In my state alone, there's 1.8 million acres waiting for treatment," Democrat Rep. Peter DeFazio said during a floor speech this week. "But they don't have the money. Does this bill fix that? No. We're addressing problems that don't ex-

ist."

DeFazio joined Walden and Schrader in introducing an amendment to the legislation that protected, from the bill, lands designated as Wild & Scenic, Wilderness or National Trail System, among others, but in the end, he voted against the bill.

While he said he appreciated the provisions that partially address "fire borrowing" — the process of taking money from other budgeted areas to fight wildfires — the limits to judicial review and the lack of funding stood out.

His colleagues in the "nay" camp felt similarly.

"The House chose to undermine bedrock environmental laws, interfere with judicial review and sacrifice the integri-

ty of our public lands in the name of a false fix for wildfires," Democrat Rep. Earl Blumenauer said in a statement.

"When this bill goes to the Senate, I hope it comes back with policy that improves forest management without undermining environmental protections," Democrat Rep. Suzanne Bonamici said in a statement. "We must put an end to the practice of fire-borrowing, and we need to better manage our federal forests."

Several bills addressing this issue have been introduced, but some in D.C. expect this will be the only major piece of legislation on this issue to see a vote by the end of the year.

It passed with some bipartisan support in the House — 10 Democrats voted for, while nine Republicans voted against — but could be in trouble in the Senate, where similar bills have died in the past, and top Democrats have already voiced opposition.

Oregon's Democratic Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley both said the bill wouldn't receive their support.

"These overreaching riders create more problems than they solve and would likely harm forest health rather than improve it," Wyden said in a statement. "The key to forest health is smart, effective, ecologically appropriate management."

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Soccer

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school team and it was great coaching and it was fun playing with my friends and everything," said Collier, who won a state championship on Blanchet's girls basketball team last year. "But I really felt like coming here would help me with college."

Collier's mom, Cindy, said not playing soccer for Blanchet was an "agonizing decision" for her daughter.

"It was not cut and dry," Cindy Collier said. "She spent years with them and the community of Blanchet is awesome. We had lots of conversations about it over the summer months and she kind of took it from there."

"She's been very supportive of her Blanchet soccer team and tried to make games that she can watch and cheer 'em on."

The time commitment in what amounts to year-round soccer, combined with academics, leaves the girls with little time for much else. It is certainly more taxing than playing high school soccer.

Emily Collier says these days soccer feels like a full-time job, not that she's complaining.

"It's always soccer. It's always saying no to friends," Collier said. "It's like, 'I have soccer.' It's kind of funny, but I mean it's kind of like my life."

It's a major part of the parents life as well, with travel, costs and moral support.

"We've been doing this for a while (with club soccer)," Cindy Collier said. "This time it's just several months longer."

What about multi-sport athletes?

The Oregon School Activities Association does not prevent high school athletes from being part of the Thorns and Timbers Academy, and playing on their high school teams at the same time.

"Certainly we believe as an association that participating in multiple sports and different activities is good for kids," said Peter Weber, executive director of the OSAA.

"But ultimately that's a decision that a student and their family are going to make."

Weber added that playing multiple sports has health benefits because athletes utilize different muscle groups, and there are life lessons to be learned by branching out into other sports.

"You may be a great soccer player and that's great and that's the role you play on that team," Weber said.

"But I think there's something to be said just from an education activities standpoint of having students participate in other activities where maybe they aren't the dominant star player and they're playing different roles on those teams."

There are more decisions coming for Thorns Academy players who are multi-sport athletes.

While participation in high school sports other than soccer remains a gray area, it's clear where the US Soccer Girls Development Academy stands on the issue.

"I am not sure that US Soccer mandates that players don't (participate in high school sports), but it is virtually impossible to do another sport when a player is supposed to be training four times a week and at games," said Thorns/Timbers Academy director Mike Smith.

Alexander, who played on Silverton's

state runner-up girls basketball team last season, would like to continue playing high school basketball, but she "would respect the decision" not to play hoops if it conflicts with representing the Thorns Academy.

Paige's dad, Jason Alexander, acknowledges the positives of playing high school sports, but understands the commitment required to be part of the Thorns Academy.

"They're investing money into the girls and they're trying to make them better players and get them to the path they want to take," Jason Alexander said. "So I get their idea of let's concentrate on soccer only."

There is an annual cost of \$2,000 per person to play for the Thorns Academy, and according to Thurley, both the boys and girls Academy's are "heavily funded," by Merritt Paulson, majority owner of Peregrine Sports, LLC, which owns the Timbers and Thorns professional teams.

"They give us unprecedented financial backing," Thurley said. "They expect a commitment in return."

For the Timbers and Thorns, the Academy programs could benefit them down the road. In addition to promoting soccer, players from both programs could be part of future U.S. National teams, or play for the professional teams in Portland.

Richard Gunney, an assistant coach for the Thorns, often observes Thorns Academy players at practices.

"The program is great because it's given a platform for players to train and prepare for their journey," Gunney said.

Mixed emotions for high school soccer coaches

Silverton girls soccer coach Gary

Cameron supported Alexander's decision to play for the Thorns Academy, but said that elite youth soccer programs have "diluted the talent" in high school.

North Salem boys soccer coach Rich Swartzentruber has "mixed feelings" about the Academy.

The Vikings were league champions in 2011, but lost three players the following season to the Timbers Academy and failed to make the state playoffs that season.

"My preference would be that they would allow those kids to play high school sports, and for a lot of these kids, they miss out on the high school experience," Swartzentruber said. "Most of the kids in the Academy are not gonna be professional players, but in some cases it helps them get a good college scholarship."

Like for Edson Martinez, who was on the Vikings' league championship team as a freshman in 2011 and spent the next three years with the Timbers Academy. He received a soccer scholarship from Georgetown University and is now a junior midfielder for the Hoyas.

West Salem's Abbey Knoll said she missed playing with her high school teammates this season, but being affiliated with the Thorns Academy has elevated her game.

"It's a lot of time, doing homework in the car and stuff," Knoll said. "It's always soccer, but it's worth it."

And that's the lure: State-of-the-art facilities, better competition and more opportunity.

For girls who are talented enough to play for the Thorns Academy, the potential rewards are worth what they've given up.

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OBITUARIES

November 27, 1923 - November 1, 2017
Muriel Darlene (Boehm) Ditchen went to be with her Lord and Savior on November 1, 2017 at the age of 93 surrounded by her family.



She was born November 27, 1923 in Dane County, Wisconsin to Ruben and Anna Boehm on the Boehm Homestead Farm where she lived until the 8th grade when the family moved to Salem, Oregon in 1938. After

high school she worked for the State Insurance Department in Salem until her marriage to Carl Ditchen, and lived in the Silverton area where they farmed. They were active members of Christian Center Church in Salem where she greeted for many years.

She loved spending time with family and friends, reading her Bible, playing the piano, playing games and making her famous Angel Food cakes.

She moved to Lancaster Village in November 2014 in Salem, Oregon where she was cared for the remainder of her life. Survivors include sons, David (Wil-

ma) Ditchen, Eldon, both of Silverton and daughter Judy (Greg) Bennett of Salem. Grandchildren: Tony (Rachel) Bennett, Duane (Shauna) Ditchen, Darrin (Angela) Ditchen, Ryan (Tara) Bennett, Elyse (Chad) Clement, Eric Ditchen and 13 great grandchildren. Siblings: Bev (Jack) Tincknell of Keizer, OR, RoJean (Larry) Danilson of Penn Valley, CA and Betty Lou (Barry) Biggs of Seattle, WA and many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her husband and two grandchildren.

Special thanks to Lancaster Village and Kindred Hospice for their care and

support.

Viewing will be Thursday, November 9 from 4 to 8pm at Howell, Edwards, Doerksen with Rigdon-Ransom Funeral Directors.

Services will be held November 10, 2017, at Salem Alliance Church in Salem, Oregon at 10:30 am.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Kindred Hospice Salem, OR, or to the Union Gospel Mission in Salem, OR.

Arrangements are entrusted to Howell, Edwards, Doerksen with Rigdon-Ransom Funeral Directors.

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