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NORPAC's \$4.5 million offer is last step in bankruptcy

Bill Poehler
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The former NORPAC is proposing to pay \$4.5 million to settle with its former farmers for crops they delivered to the agricultural processor in 2019 while the company was starting its bankruptcy proceedings, but it's about a quarter of what the farmers are owed. In the filing submitted Tuesday by Tonkon Torp attorney Albert Kennedy, who is representing the bankrupt co-op now known as North Pacific Cannery and Packers, farmers who delivered crops to the company in 2019 were owed over \$16 million. For the settlement to move forward, farmers with 85% of the outstanding claims must sign the agree-

ment. The settlement is the last financial uncertainty in the unraveling of what at one time was one of Oregon's largest agricultural processors. Court documents show the settlement was reached after a mediation sessions with Bankruptcy Judge David Hercher on June 30 and July 2. The co-op was owned by over 140 farmers and approximately 100 of them have filed claims for fruits and vegetables delivered, most of them coming after the company for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in August 2019. Many of the farmers are owed hundreds of thousands of dollars for the goods they delivered.

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The former NORPAC group has proposed a settlement with its farmers who went unpaid in 2019, but for the deal to move forward, farmers with 85% of the outstanding claims must agree to it. STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE



The Detroit Dam on the North Santiam River was constructed in 1953. STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE

Judge rules dam operations are imperiling fish

Bill Poehler
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' failure to meet timelines in implementing fish passage and temperature controls at dams in the Willamette River basin has imperiled threatened native fish species and resulted in poor water quality, a district court judge ruled this week.

U.S. District Court Judge Marco Hernandez granted a summary judgement in a case brought by four environmental groups, finding the Corps is years behind the timeline needed to complete the work as required under a 2008 decision and hasn't altered operations in the interim.

Under the ruling, the Corps will have to change how it operates dams in the basin so threatened Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and steelhead don't



Chinook salmon fry entering the Fall Creek Reservoir. U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Last lawsuit involving Traeger Grills now settled

Bill Poehler
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USA TODAY NETWORK

The last of the lawsuits involving Traeger Pellet Grills has been settled.

The company's suit against rival Dansons in Arizona District Court was dismissed with prejudice by Judge Douglas Reyes after the companies reached a settlement in the case.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed. The suit, filed in July 2019, centered on accusations that Dansons copied Traeger in advertising for the company and the designs for its line of pellet grills. Parts of the Arizona suit and a separate suit in Florida involving Dansons use of Traeger founder Joe Traeger and the Traeger barn in Mt. Angel in advertising for Dansons was settled in December 2019 with

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Mail-in voting concerns are addressed for Nov. 3 election

Whitney Woodworth Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Cuts to the U.S. Postal Services and the growing dependence on mail-in voting has many worried about whether their mailed ballots will be counted in time for the Nov. 3 election.

But elections officials in Oregon say they're working to ensure every voter in the state has the chance to cast their ballot.

Concern over the reliability was heightened after dozens of letter collection boxes were removed, President Donald Trump ordered cuts to the Postal Service and a letter penned by USPS General Counsel Thomas Marshall warned Oregon Secretary of State Bev Clarno of potential delays in mail-in voting.

Oregon was among the dozens of states to receive the warning.

In the letter, Marshall said Oregon's deadline, which generally has official mail ballots to voters 14 days before Election Day, "appears to be compatible" with the Postal Service's delivery standards, but only if ballots are mailed to voters 14 days before the election and are mailed back by Oct. 27.

Concerns eased a bit Tuesday after Postmaster General Louis DeJoy said he would pause further operational changes until after the November election.

Clarno said her office will continue to work with the Postal Service to monitor any potential impact on both the mailing out of ballots and the return of ballots.

"Fortunately, Oregon has two decades of experience working with our local contacts at the United States Postal Service and has an excellent partnership with them to ensure ongoing support for our elections," Clarno said in a statement. "The USPS recognizes that Oregon leads the nation with Vote by Mail and that we are using the latest USPS technology to streamline the process."

Clarno said her office will continue to work with their partners, like county clerks and USPS, across the state to make sure all Oregonians know the best options to return their ballots, whether it's through the mail or in secure drop boxes to meet election deadlines.

Marion County Clerk Bill Burgess echoed Clarno's reassurances.

"We have confidence that the post office is going to get the job done in Oregon," Burgess said.

After talking with officials from the U.S. Postal Service, Burgess said the county was still planning on mailing out ballots 20 days before the election.

He stuck with the usual recommendation for voters to mail-in ballots at least seven days before election day on Nov. 3.

Polk County Clerk Val Unger said her office has been receiving calls from voters concerned over possible delays.

She said Oregonians have been voting by mail for a long time and she is confident that there will be no issues with delivering and receiving ballots to those in Polk County.

Unger did express concern over possible delays in mailing for out-of-the-country voters and has been working with those in the military and others living internationally to ensure they can cast a vote.

Ernie Swanson, a spokesman for USPS, said he is not aware of any significant mail delays in Oregon.

"We are encouraging voters to mail in their ballots for the Nov. 3 general election about a week before the election date just to be sure the ballots are in the election offices in time to be counted," Swanson said.

He also said a 90-day moratorium has been placed on removing mail collection boxes.

The USPS later announced there would be no postal service changes until after the November election.

Mail-in voting, long a staple in Oregon, has also seen a recent uptick.

About 35% of ballots in Marion County were mailed in previous years, Burgess said.

The Oregon Legislature voted in 2019 to add post-

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