



Andrew Selsky/AP Photo, File

Pro-Trump and anti-mask demonstrators protest outside the Oregon State Capitol on Monday, Dec. 21, 2020, as legislators meet for an emergency session. State lawmakers will delay the start of much of the work of next week’s legislative session due to concerns about the possibility of violent protests.

Lawmakers delay meetings because of protest worries

Associated Press

SALEM — State lawmakers in Oregon will delay by at least two days much of the substantive work of next week’s beginning of the Legislature because of warnings from law enforcement about the possibility of violent protests.

The Legislature will convene Tuesday, Jan. 19. But the state House and Senate have cancelled floor sessions and committee hearings, and there will be no in-person meetings.

“There’s concern that they don’t quite know what the level or the intensity of

the demonstrations might be because of what’s happened before to the Oregon Capitol ... and in D.C.,” Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, told the Statesman Journal.

Before a mob of pro-Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol last week, Oregon lawmakers last month saw a violent crowd enter the state Capitol, fight with police and damage the building. The people opposed to COVID-19 restrictions showed up in Salem on Dec. 21 during a one-day special legislative session.

Courtney said delaying the start of the regular legislation sessions was one of several recommendations Oregon State Police made and legislative leadership approved. Concrete blocks were placed in front of the Capitol in late December, and the first-floor windows will be boarded up with plywood.

The FBI said Thursday, Jan. 14, it is setting up a command post in Portland to prepare for any potential violent activity this weekend and into next week related to the mob attack in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6.

Groups ask court to restore protections for U.S. gray wolves

By MATTHEW BROWN

Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — Wildlife advocates on Thursday, Jan. 14, asked a federal court to overturn a U.S. government decision that stripped Endangered Species Act protections for wolves across most of the nation.

Two coalitions of advocacy groups filed lawsuits in U.S. District Court in Northern California seeking to restore safeguards for a predator that is revered by wildlife watchers but feared by many livestock producers.

The Trump administration announced just days ahead of the Nov. 3 election that wolves were considered recovered.

They had been wiped out across most of the U.S. by the 1930s under government-sponsored poisoning and trapping campaigns.

A remnant population in the western Great Lakes region has since expanded to some 4,400 wolves in



U.S. Forest Service via AP, File

This remote camera image from June 29, 2017, shows a female gray wolf and two pups in Lassen National Forest in Northern California. Wildlife advocates this week asked a federal court to overturn a U.S. government decision that stripped protections for wolves across most of the nation.

Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

More than 2,000 occupy six states in the Northern Rockies and Pacific Northwest after wolves from Canada were reintroduced in Idaho and Yellowstone National Park starting in 1995. Protections for wolves in the Rockies were lifted over the last decade and hunting of them is allowed.

But wolves remain absent across most of their historical range and the groups that filed Thursday’s

lawsuits said continued protections are needed so wolf populations can continue to expand in Colorado, California and other states.

Some biologists who reviewed the administration’s plan to strip protections from wolves said it lacked scientific justification.

Plaintiffs in the lawsuits include the Sierra Club, WildEarth Guardians, Humane Society of the U.S. and other environmental and advocacy groups.

Trump administration slashes imperiled spotted owls’ habitat

By GILLIAN FLACCUS

Associated Press

PORTLAND— The Trump administration said Wednesday, Jan. 13, it would slash millions of acres of protected habitat designated for the imperiled northern spotted owl in Oregon, Washington state and Northern California, much of it in prime timber locations in Oregon’s coastal ranges.

Environmentalists decried the move and accused the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under President Donald Trump of taking a parting shot at protections designed to help restore the species in favor of the timber industry. The tiny owl is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and was rejected for an upgrade to endangered status last year by the federal agency despite losing nearly 4% of its population annually.

“This revision guts

protected habitat for the northern spotted owl by more than a third. It’s Trump’s latest parting gift to the timber industry and another blow to a species that needs all the protections it can get to fully recover,” said Noah Greenwald with the Center for Biological Diversity.

Timber groups applauded the decision, which won’t take effect for 60 days. More thinning and management of protected forests is necessary to prevent wildfires, which devastated 560 square miles of spotted owl habitat last fall, said Travis Joseph, president of the American Forest Resources Council. Of that, about 300 square miles is no longer considered viable for the birds.

Loss of the ability to log in areas protected for the spotted owl has devastated rural communities, he said. The 3.4 million acres removed from fed-

eral protections Wednesday includes all of Oregon’s so-called O&C lands. The more than 2 million acres are spread in a checkerboard pattern over 18 counties in western Oregon.

“This rule rights a wrong imposed on rural communities and businesses and gives us a chance to restore balance to federal forest management and species conservation in the Pacific Northwest,” Joseph said.

The Fish and Wildlife Service agreed in a settlement with the timber industry to reevaluate the spotted owls’ protected territory following a 2018 U.S. Supreme Court decision involving a different federally protected species.

The Trump administration has moved to roll back protections for waterways and wetlands, narrow protections for wildlife facing extinction and open more public land to oil and gas drilling.

State expands reservations window for campgrounds

By JAMIE HALE

The Oregonian/OregonLive

SALEM — An error in the Oregon state parks reservations system has left many unhappy campers across the state.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department offered an apology Thursday, after its highly anticipated spring and summer campground reservations opened six hours early, leaving many prospective campers in the lurch.

On Monday, the parks department announced that its reservation window would expand to six months starting Thursday, allowing campers to plan for spring and summer vacation. The department also announced that reservations would become available at 6 a.m. instead of midnight, as had been the practice for years.

But it didn’t work out that way.

Many people who dutifully woke up at 6 a.m. Thursday to book sites at competitive campgrounds or for coveted holiday weekends were suddenly left empty handed, beat out by campers who had grabbed the sites early.

State parks spokesman Chris Havel said the reservations system vendor, Aspira (which operates as ReserveAmerica), simply did not apply the new 6 a.m. start time to Oregon campgrounds, as requested. That meant campsites opened at midnight, as usual, he said.

“We have made it clear that this error must be fixed immediately,” Havel said. “We sincerely apologize for the mistake to the people who waited until 6 a.m. to make their reservations just like we asked them to.”

The 6 a.m. start time is now working, and will be in effect for

anyone making reservations Friday morning and beyond, Havel said.

It’s been another twist for state park reservations, which have been out of whack for nearly a year since all campgrounds closed in March due to the coronavirus pandemic.

When campgrounds reopened at the end of May, reservations were only taken for two weeks in advance, though the parks department later expanded that to 30 days. Prior to the pandemic, campers were allowed to book campsites, yurts and cabins up to nine months in advance.

A new proposal would allow state park campgrounds more flexibility in their reservation windows, and if approved it would allow reservations up to 18 months in advance, marking yet another change to the way people book campsites in Oregon.

Embattled state legislator stays in office with less clout, less access

By JAKE THOMAS

Salem Reporter via AP StoryShare

SALEM — State Rep. Mike Nearman, R-Independence, hasn’t heeded the House speaker’s calls to resign after he let a group of rioters into

the Capitol building last month. But he will have significantly diminished influence over legis-

lation when lawmakers meet for the 2021 session next week, and he’ll have diminished access to the Capitol building.

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, removed Nearman from all of his committee assignments.

While bills need to pass the House and Senate and be signed by the governor to become law, committees often are where the bulk of the leg-

islative work happens.

Nearman also agreed to safety measures that would require him to give 24-hour notice before he comes to the Capitol to allow staff and legislators time to adjust their schedule if they do not feel safe having him in the building.

On Monday, Jan. 11, he read a statement on the House floor agreeing to not allow non-authorized individuals into the building and to give up his badge that gives him access to the Capitol. The Capitol building has been closed since spring as a pandemic precaution.

According to Danny Moran, Kotek’s spokesperson, Nearman agreed to the safety measures in writing.

As committees draft bills, they hear from concerned citizens, advocacy groups and officials from local and state governments. Mem-

bers of committees propose amendments that can substantially weaken or strengthen the provisions of legislation. Sometimes, legislation is almost entirely rewritten by committees.

Committees largely write the state’s two-year budget. If bills don’t pass out of committees, they usually don’t have a viable route to becoming law.

First elected in 2014 to a district just west of Salem, Nearman previously served on the House’s information management and technology, education and general government committees. Despite losing his positions on these committees, he’ll still be able to introduce legislation on the floor and respond to constituent concerns. He also can offer amendments to bills that come to the House floor and vote on their passage.

Search now deemed recovery mission for Oregon woman lost in landslide

Associated Press

PORTLAND — Searchers used inflatable yellow rafts and drove metal poles into deep mud Thursday, Jan. 14, as they searched for a woman who was swept away by a landslide in Oregon during a powerful winter storm.

Authorities said in social media posts they

have found part of the SUV that Jennifer Camus Moore, 50, of Warrendale was driving when she was swept away Wednesday but have not located her.

Later Thursday, authorities said searchers believe her car came to rest under 15 feet of mud and debris and the search had become a recovery mission.

Moore, a nurse, was caught up in a landslide in the Columbia River Gorge that was triggered by heavy rain and high winds that pounded the Pacific Northwest on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The cliffs around the search area near the small community of Dodson remain unstable.

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