

Washington

Senator introduces bill to tax beekeepers as farmers

Legislation would extend exemptions for apiarists

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — A Washington state senator has again proposed defining commercial beekeepers as “farmers,” a title that comes with tax breaks.

Senate Bill 5017, filed by Sunnyside Republican Jim Honeyford, would direct the state Department of Revenue to tax apiarists as farmers and ranchers and bee products as crops and livestock.

The bill would make permanent tax relief lawmakers gave beekeepers in 2008 to soothe losses from colonies collapsing. The tax exemptions are due to expire in 2017.

Honeyford said considering the importance of beekeepers to agriculture, they shouldn't have to periodically lobby to renew the tax breaks.

“Agriculture couldn't go on without them, especially the tree fruit industry,” he said.

Making the tax exemptions permanent would enshrine tax savings of roughly \$100,000 a year for about 100 beekeepers, according to DOR estimates.

Being designated a farmer by the state would also mean something, said Mark Emrich, president of the Washington State Beekeepers Association.

“It's finally being recognized. We're a piece of agriculture. We're not a service organization. Seriously, I think it's huge for beekeepers,” he said.

A similar bill, also introduced by Honeyford, passed the Senate last year, but



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

A Washington state senator has introduced a bill to take some of the sting out of taxes paid by beekeepers.

stalled in the House Finance Committee. The 2015 Legislature convenes Jan. 12.

Honeyford's bill would make beekeepers eligible for lower taxes on the money they collect for their services, such as pollination, or goods, such as honey and beeswax.

Beekeepers would save the most, some \$84,000 a year in state and local taxes, by being exempt from sales taxes on the sugar-syrup apiarists must sometimes feed bees, according to DOR.

The agency estimated in 2013 that beekeepers spend \$945,000 a year on feed.

DOR estimated beekeepers also would save \$7,000 a year on earnings from pollinating services.

Pollinators from another state are supposed to pay the tax for work they do in Washington, but DOR says it doesn't have a way to check who came into the state to pollinate crops, so the tax goes uncollected. Washington beekeepers say this puts them at a disadvantage to out-of-state competitors.

Group uses billboards to take stand on wolves

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

A Spokane-based group has mounted a billboard advertising campaign to increase awareness of the impact wolves have on Washington state.

Washington Residents Against Wolves began the campaign using eight billboards in November and December. The billboards include such messages as “Endangered? No. Deadly? Yes. Good for Washington? Absolutely not” and “The wolf — Who's next on their menu?” It shows pictures of a deer, an elk, a calf, a dog and a young girl.

The billboards were intended to stir interest and educate residents about the impacts of wolves on the state, a spokesman for the group said.

“We've received many good inquiries and inputs on the billboards, although we've also had death threats as well from people who mostly don't even reside within our state,” said David Burdge, a spokesman and member of the group.

The group has 20 members and is not affiliated with any other organization. Its members are concerned about the health and safety of Washington wildlife and residents, Burdge said.

“We would like to see a new wolf management plan drawn up that manages our wildlife equally,” he said. WARAW believes the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is not following its wolf management plan and using lethal control when the plan calls for it.

“(The state needs) to be concerned about Washington residents and not special interest groups that keep threatening to sue them,” Burdge said. “Most of those people don't reside here, they don't have to live with the wolf. We do.”

He said the group realizes



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Traffic on Nevada Street in Spokane passes a Washington Residents Against Wolves billboard on Dec. 26. The grassroots group is critical of how the state Department of Fish and Wildlife manages the growing wolf population.

wolves are here to stay.

“We are not for eradicating the entire population. We would like to have the department look at their wolf management plan and cut the numbers down to something much more realistic.”

WARAW would prefer five or six breeding pairs across the state. There are currently 11 packs in northeast Washington. “We're trying to give people who may be on the fence or just don't know a truly factual base from which they can educate themselves,” he said.

Mitch Friedman, executive director of Conservation Northwest, an organization that supports wolves, said WARAW is not trying

Online
<http://waraw.org/>

to demonstrate that they are thoughtful people.

“I respect groups that try to advance calm, fact-based, common-interest discussions, not so much those who try to inflame entrenched positions,” Friedman said. “When I look at those billboards and other information WARAW posts on social media, it strikes me that they're just ideologues trying to fan flames, and I don't think that's good for farmers, wolves or democracy.”

Conservation Northwest doesn't plan to respond to the

billboards. “We don't feel like waving our arms in response to their arm-waving,” Friedman said.

Jack Field, executive vice president of the Washington Cattlemen's Association, says WARAW's efforts demonstrate the impact of wolf recovery efforts. His association is not affiliated with WARAW.

“It shows there's a broad crosscut of folks that have opinions on it,” Field said. “I think these billboards help to explain some of the concerns folks have. In the northeast corner of Washington, the overall pack density looks disproportionate compared to the rest of the state. This just helps elevate the discussion.”

Farm groups join opposition

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

An organization formed to oppose Washington Gov. Jay Inslee's carbon-cutting proposal includes several agriculture groups.

The governor's cap-and-trade plan would apply to at least 130 plants, including one fertilizer manufacturer and eight food processors, according to the state Department of Ecology.

The companies, which release at least 25,000 metric tons of carbon in a year, would bid for “allowances” to emit carbon. The bidding would start at \$12.60 per metric ton, a floor price based on California's experience with cap-and-trade, according to DOE.

“It's another tax on ag,” Washington Farm Bureau director of governmental relations Tom Davis said. “There's nothing we can do about what China is sending our way, so why would we cripple our industries?”

Factories in China produce large amounts of greenhouse gases, which are seen as contributing to climate change.

Legislators, motivated by concern about climate change, in 2008 mandated carbon reductions, but they have never passed a plan to achieve those cuts. Inslee says pricing carbon would get the state on track and, in the process, raise \$1 billion a year for government programs.

DOE special assistant to the director Hedia Adelsman said the proposal is modeled after other cap-and-trade markets, such as California's. “We are not pioneers. We are not the first,” she said.

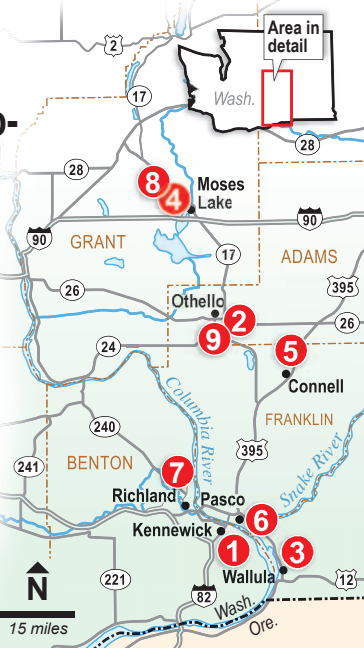
In response, 19 business and labor groups formed the Washington Climate Collaborative, which criticizes Inslee's approach to reducing carbon emissions.

On its website, the group says it's “disappointing that the governor wants to step in and create a complicated government-run financial program to regulate carbon emissions by coercing Washingtonians, not collaborating with them.”

The group states that private and public investments in energy-saving technologies

Ag businesses impacted by Washington cap-and-trade plan

1. Agrium Kennewick Fertilizer Operation
2. McCain Foods, Othello
3. Tyson Fresh Meats, Wallula
4. Basic American Foods, Moses Lake
- 5-7. ConAgra Foods Lamb Weston, Connell, Pasco and Richland
- 8, 9. JR Simplot, Moses Lake and Othello



Source: Washington State Department of Ecology
Alan Kenagal/Capital Press

and efficiencies would be a better way. Besides the state Farm Bureau, the Northwest Food Processors Association, Washington Association of

Wheat Growers, Washington Food Industry Association and Washington Potato and Onion Association joined the collaborative.

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Kim Stackhouse-Lawson, Director of Sustainability Research, NCBA
- 11:45-1:00 Lunch (provided by sponsors)
- 1:00-2:00 Outlook for Agriculture and Rural Interests in Washington, DC
Todd Van Hoose, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs, Co-Bank, Washington, DC
- 2:00-3:00 Weather and Climate, Past, Present & Future... in Oregon and Beyond
George Corvallis, President, Applied Climate Services, Corvallis, OR
- 3:00-3:15 Break (provided by sponsors)
- 3:15-4:15 Value Based Marketing for Feeder Cattle
Tom Brink, Founder/Owner, Brink Consulting/Trading, Brighton, CO

Note: for more information, please contact Kim McKague or Tim DelCurto at (541) 562-5129
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