

Washington

Organic bulletin board helps buyers, sellers

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Organic grain and hay buyers and sellers now have a place to find each other online.

Washington State University Extension has launched a searchable bulletin board that allows farmers and others to post either the organic grain and hay they have for sale or what they want to buy.

Diana Roberts, regional extension specialist for WSU in Spokane, said demand for organic grain has outpaced supply as consumers have increased over the last decade.

The bulletin board is “an opportunity for growers interested in organic production to explore that,” she said.

Worley, Idaho, farmer Ted Lacy raises organic peas for nitrogen and spring wheat, barley and oats on 80 acres. He has listed his crops on the bulletin board.

“What we raise, people have a need for,” he said. “Certain people have certain needs, and it’s hard to figure out what to grow, because everyone’s got different needs.”

The Pacific Northwest has a tiny share of the organic grain market. According to WSU Extension, in 2011, Washington had about 6,500 acres of certified organic wheat, Idaho had 10,000 acres and Oregon less than 5,000. Montana grew 66,000 acres of organic grain.

Online
<http://smallgrains.wsu.edu/organic-grain-sales-bulletin-board/>

Senate deadline cages cougar bill

Ranchers say losses are mounting

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Optimism turned into disappointment for Central Washington ranchers who asked lawmakers to loosen the ban on using dogs to pursue cougars.

A measure that would have exempted six counties from statewide restrictions on hound hunting died Wednesday in the Senate.

“I’m disappointed more than I can say,” Klickitat County rancher Keith Kreps said. “I really thought that this year we had a chance.”

Kreps and other ranchers testified in February that they’re suffering heavy and increasing losses to cougars.



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Klickitat County, Wash., rancher Keith Kreps shows photos of calves wounded by cougars after he spoke Feb. 18 to the Senate Natural Resources and Parks Committee.

They said dogs are the most effective way to make cougars

wary about stalking livestock.

Senate Bill 5940 would have allowed county commissioners in Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Chelan, Okanogan and Klickitat counties to work with state wildlife managers to pursue or kill troublesome cougars with the aid of dogs.

The bill passed the Senate Natural Resources and Parks Committee in a bipartisan vote, but wasn’t brought up for a vote by the full Senate. The deadline for bills to pass the chamber they were introduced in was Wednesday.

The committee’s chairman, Monroe Republican Kirk Pearson, said the bill, sponsored by Sen. Brian Dassel, R-Republic, fell victim to the crush of legislation as 49 senators divvied up floor time. Two wolf-related bills backed by livestock groups and sponsored by Dassel passed before the deadline.

“A lot of good bills died, and that was one of them,” Pearson said.

Efforts to reach Dassel on Thursday were unsuccessful.

Washington Cattlemen’s Association Executive Vice President Jack Field said he was disappointed the cougar bill didn’t pass, but that wolves were “far and away probably the biggest priority.”

The Senate and House passed similar bills instructing the Department of Fish and Wildlife to reopen the state’s wolf recovery plan in response to livestock predation in the northeast corner of the state. The differences in the Senate and House bills are fairly minor.

Field said he was optimistic a wolf bill will reach Gov. Jay Inslee’s desk.

Kreps said he agrees wolves are more worrisome, but he said he wished lawmakers had addressed cougars, too.

The big cats are costing him tens of thousands of dollars, he said.

“It comes down to dollars and cents, and I guess people just feel our livestock are expendable,” he said.

The Humane Society of the United States opposed the bill, and WDFW stayed neutral.

Washington voters in 1996 banned hound hunting through an initiative. In 2003, the Legislature authorized a “pilot project” that relaxed the ban in five counties. The pilot project expired in 2011 and has not been renewed. WDFW said it was unclear whether the pilot project protected people or livestock.

Washington House passes Carlton Complex fire bill

Landowners would have more freedom to jump on blazes

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — A bill sparked by anecdotes about a sluggish state response to the Carlton Complex fires last summer in north-central Washington passed the House unanimously on Tuesday.

House Bill 2093 would allow landowners to cross property lines without permission to fight a spreading wildfire.

The state Department of Natural Resources also would be required to appoint a wildland fire liaison and form a committee to advise it on fighting wildfires.

The bill, which passed 97-0, now goes to the Senate.

The measure was inspired by Okanogan County residents who said they had



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Old Highway 97, just north of Malott, Wash., served as a fire break on the eastern edge of the Carlton Complex Fire last summer. The Washington House has unanimously passed a bill that would authorize landowners to cross property lines without permission to fight a spreading wildfire.

chances to stop small lightning-ignited blazes from growing into the largest wildland fire in the state’s history.

Residents said they waited in vain for permission from DNR to enter public lands.

House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Chairman Brian Blake and Rep. Joel Kretz, R-Wauconda, met with residents in January in Okanogan County. Kretz introduced the bill, which came through Blake’s committee.

“This is probably the most important bill I have this ses-

sion,” said Blake, an Aberdeen Democrat.

The bill’s main provision would protect initiative-taking residents from being arrested or sued, unless they do something grossly negligent while trying to extinguish a fire on somebody else’s

property. Residents would be prohibited from lighting backfires, attacking fires by aircraft or directing other people’s firefighting efforts.

HB 2093 would establish about five new positions at the DNR, including the wildland fire liaison, who would represent landowners and the public during a fire.

The liaison also would lead the advisory committee and prepare a report on how to improve training and speed up responses to fires.

DNR would be authorized to provide on-the-scene training to people who could be employed in an emergency.

Earlier proposals by Kretz to shift more authority to local fire officials or counties were opposed by DNR and the union representing state wildland firefighters.

The Office of Financial Management estimates that implementing the bill would cost more than \$1 million during the 2015-17 two-year budget cycle.

WSU, wheat growers seek support for new plant sciences building

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Washington State University agricultural college’s leaders are seeking legislative support for a new plant sciences building.

The proposed 100,000-square-foot plant sciences building and a 30,000-square-foot greenhouse are high on the list of university priorities, said Jim Moyer, director of WSU’s Agricultural Research Center and associate dean for research in the College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences.

The building would serve as laboratory and office space, bringing together plant scientists from crop and soil sciences, biological chemistry, plant

pathology and horticulture.

The design phase will cost \$6.6 million, Moyer said. The total cost of the building would be determined during the design phase. Moyer said construction would hopefully begin in 2017.

Capital projects typically get funds in three phases. Planning funds are provided in the first biennium, design funds are provided in the second biennium and construction is funded in the third biennium.

Washington Association of Wheat Growers and university representatives met with legislators on the building several weeks ago and hope to see funding for the design phase in the capital budget, WAWG past president Nicole Berg said.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Jim Moyer, director of Washington State University’s Agricultural Research Center, addresses Washington Grain Commission board members during the commission meeting March 12 in Spokane.

Moyer provided an update during a Washington Grain Commission board meeting in Spokane.

“It’s highly needed,” commissioner Mike Miller said. Improved facilities will enhance the university’s ability

to recruit top-notch scientists, he said.

Commissioner Dana Heron said the facility is critical to bolstering WSU’s research capabilities.

“We are desperately short of lab space,” he said. “If you’re waiting six months to put your pots in a lab, you’re slowing research down. Our job primarily is to make sure those constraints are no longer constraints.”

The building would take pressure off WSU’s Johnson Hall, where most of the university’s plant researchers work.

“Johnson Hall is about in the same shape it was when I was an undergraduate,” Moyer said with a chuckle.

“I always hoped I’d live long enough to see the day they tear

Johnson Hall to the ground,” said Randy Suess, Whitman County representative on the commission. “Johnson Hall was designed before the days of computers, so wiring, plumbing, heating and cooling” all need to be upgraded. “It makes a lot more sense to move out of that dilapidated old building.”

WAWG will keep talking with state legislators about the importance of the building, Berg said.

WSU leverages state funds it receives with outside funding, Moyer said.

“It’s important we have the infrastructure to be competitive,” he said. “If we can’t do top-notch research, then we’re not going to be competitive for federal funding.”

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Wireworm test plot in Bl. John, Washington

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