

Washington

Fertilizer gets pushed onto oil train bill

Legislation could impact transport of anhydrous ammonia

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Anhydrous ammonia, a nitrogen-based fertilizer, has been dragged into legislation to regulate railroad tankers carrying crude oil.

Train traffic between the Bakken oil fields and West Coast refineries is increasing rapidly. Lawmakers are working on a bill to help agencies respond to and prevent fiery derailments.

The Senate and House have passed separate measures that must be reconciled. Both bills focus on crude oil, but Senate Bill 5057 was amended late, on a 25-24 vote, to require oil trains to add crew members on the rear of the train to decouple cars in an accident.

The labor-supported amendment also extended the bill to cover anhydrous ammonia shipments, potentially increasing transportation costs.

The bill's prime sponsor, Ferndale Republican Doug Erickson, opposed broadening the legislation, but the amendment passed 25-24, with primarily Democrat support. Once amended, the bill passed 26-23, with Republican support. Democrats argued the bill didn't go far enough, particularly in keeping the public informed on train schedules.

Washington Farm Bureau director of governmental relations Tom Davis said hauling fertilizer has not been an issue, but it's now caught up into the debate over transporting hazardous substances.

"We'd rather not get sucked into the fight," Davis said.

"For us, it's a risk management issue," he said. "Show us where it rises to this (oil trains) issue. We believe our safety record is pretty strong and doesn't justify these greater restrictions."



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Rail cars roll past a crossing guard on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe mainline March 18 in southwest Washington. A safety bill focused on crude oil was amended in the state Senate to cover anhydrous ammonia, a nitrogen-based fertilizer.

In the end, anhydrous ammonia may not be in the bill worked out between the Senate and House.

The House version, House 1449, is generally viewed as the more strict of the two bills, but does not apply to transporting fertilizer.

Senate Majority Leader Mark Schoesler, who voted against adding anhydrous ammonia to the bill, said the chemical has been transported for more than 50 years without a problem.

"I think that's a great tribute to how it's handled," he said. "Clearly, there was some collateral damage (by the amendment) that needs to be addressed."

Schoesler said it would be impractical to stop trains at the Idaho border and add a caboose and one or two crew members, depending on the length of the train.

"We've got to get it fixed," he said.

Gov. Jay Inslee supports legislation to regulate oil trains. Asked Tuesday whether he supports including other chemicals to the bill, he was non-committal.

"I know there are more

substances than gasoline that can be very, very dangerous — chlorine, fertilizer can be explosive. I don't have a firm position on that," he said.

Adding two rear brakemen to a train traveling between Idaho and Canada via Pasco, Vancouver and Seattle would cost

\$3,326, according to Herb Krohn, legislative director for United Transportation Union, which represents railroad workers.

Krohn said the union supports excluding anhydrous ammonia from the new restrictions, except in the case of unusually long trains.

New apples join Pink Lady logo

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

YAKIMA, Wash. — Five relatively new apple varieties will be sold under the Pink Lady trademark in an effort to provide Cripps Pink type apples to consumers earlier in the season.

Cripps Pink is a late variety harvested in late October and early November. Many are sold under the Pink Lady logo by Pink Lady America, a Yakima company owned by Lynnell Brandt.

Brandt also owns a nursery, Brandt Fruit Trees, and a variety management company, Proprietary Variety Management, in Yakima.

Cripps Pink sometimes needs to be stored for a period of time for sugars and acids to balance, said John Reeves, general manager of Pink Lady America.

"Now we'll be seeing newly harvested Pink Lady brand apples on the market as much as

two months earlier," he said.

While a "terrific consumer benefit," earlier production also reduces risk of crop loss from late season weather, he said.

All five new varieties are similar in sweet-tart taste, pink color and crunch to Cripps Pink, he said. All five are non-GMO, natural breeding selections already patented, he said.

Starting with the 2015 crop, the five will be sold as Pink Lady, simplifying labeling and signage for shippers, retailers and consumers and assuring specific quality standards, Reeves said. Several nurseries in addition to Brandt Fruit Trees, will be licensed to grow the trees, he said.

"Pink Lady America's vision is to make our brand the most well-known brand, which is a big job," Reeves said.

"Our mission is to provide more revenue for the entire value chain, from the breeder and nursery to the grower and packer, and premium value to the consumer," he said.

Washington ag groups sow interest at Capitol

Booths highlight industry's contributions to state

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — There was a goat and two chickens but no bull on the Capitol Campus Thursday for the inaugural ag day.

Some 15 agricultural organizations set up booths to promote their industry.

"This event has been really fun because so many ag groups came together," said event organizer Karla Salp, executive director of Washington Farmers & Ranchers.

Throughout the legislative session, groups come to the Capitol to highlight their industry and causes. Last week, bloodied actors portrayed Zombies outside the Legislative Building while simultaneously lobbying for tax breaks for the entertainment industry.

There wasn't any overarching legislative theme for ag day. Organizations such as FFA, the Grange and the Washington State Department of Agriculture had booths, along with



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington State Potato Commission marketing director Ryan Holterhoff talks spuds at the commission's booth March 19 on the Capitol Campus in Olympia.

commodity commissions and trade groups, such as Washington Friends of Farms and Forests and the Washington Cattleman's Association.

"It's mostly all about education," Salp said.

First Odessa water service contracts signed

Landowners to receive water during spring irrigation season

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The first contracts have been signed for water from the Columbia River to replace well water in the Odessa Subarea, the manager of the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District says.

The water will be delivered from the Columbia River this spring, district manager Craig

Simpson said. The landowners are installing the equipment necessary to take delivery.

Contract priority was based on the land's inclusion date in the Columbia Basin Project and the date of application for the water, Simpson said.

The district does not try to quantify need, he said. The decision was based on eligibility.

"If they're in the Odessa Subarea, and they had a priority application date, that made them eligible," he said.

Two contracts were signed with the Marlin Hutterian brethren, and two others were with individual farmers, representing a total of roughly 1,200 acres. Some 7,500 acres are currently authorized to receive water.