

Klamath water transfer bill draws suspicion

Opponents fear legislation would ratify controversial water deal

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

SALEM — Irrigators in Oregon's Klamath Basin are seeking more flexibility in how they manage water due to concerns of looming drought in the region.

However, legislation that would allow Klamath irrigators to transfer or lease water rights has met with suspicion from opponents of a controversial dam removal project.

Currently, water transfers and leases aren't permitted in the Klamath Basin because the ownership of water rights in the region is still being legally adjudicated. Senate Bills 206 and 264 would permit such transfers for water rights that have already been quantified and allow state regulators to participate in a "joint management

entity" with irrigators in the upper Klamath Basin as part of a legal settlement. "We want to have the same flexibility that other landowners in the state do," said Greg Addington, executive director of the Klamath Water Users Association, during a March 23 legislative hearing. Klamath Basin irrigators must already leave water in-stream for federally protected fish, but allowing them to technically lease that water would avoid the risk of forfeiting water rights, he said.

"This is putting the basin on equal footing with the rest of the state," said Richard Whitman, natural resources advisor to Oregon Gov. Kate Brown. While the bills refer to two legal settlements between irrigators, tribes and conservationists, the legislation in "no way" represents a codification or ratification of those agreements, Whitman said. Opponents of those broader Klamath deals — which allocate water use and require the removal of four hydroelectric dams, among other provisions

— claim that SB 206 and SB 264 are necessary for the legal settlements to proceed. "They are integral parts and pieces of them," said Tom Mallams, a Klamath County commissioner and opponent of dam removal, during the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources hearing. Proponents claim removing four dams from the Klamath River would restore water quality and hydrological function, but critics say it would release toxic sediments and reduce property tax revenues for counties.

Farmers who rely on the Klamath Irrigation Project and those who are upstream of it have signed two separate water use deals with tribes, which hold "time immemorial" water rights in the region. However, those deals still hinge on dam removal and federal funding for environmental restoration efforts. Mallams said that local residents continue to oppose dam removal and claimed that farmers have signed onto the broader settlements under duress as they fear losing the ability to irrigate.

\$2 million bee health package sought

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

SALEM — Oregon lawmakers are thinking of spending \$2 million for pollinator research, but a beekeeper group is perturbed by some of the legislation. The legislative package — House Bills 3360, 3361 and 3362 — would pay for a bee diagnostic facility at Oregon State University and pollinator health outreach efforts, with beekeepers contributing part of the money through an assessment of 50 cents per hive. While the current bills don't specify funding levels, speakers at a recent legislative hearing said they envision about \$1 million for four full-time staff, \$500,000 for equipment and \$500,000 for outreach during the 2015-2017 biennium.

Beekeepers have been losing roughly 30 percent of their hives in recent years due to a combination of factors, including malnutrition, pests, diseases, pesticides and low genetic diversity, said Ramesh Sagili, a bee entomologist at OSU. "There is not a single good explanation for this," he said during a March 19 hearing before the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources. Last year, legislators directed a task force representing beekeepers, pesticide users and conservationists to examine possible solutions to the problem, which resulted in the funding recommendations. The Oregon State Beekeep-

ers Association is generally supportive of the legislative package but is troubled by provisions in HB 3362, which deals with registration and assessments for beekeepers. Harry Vanderpool, the group's vice president, said his group objected to the bill's requirement that money collected from beekeepers be spent on "honeybee and native bee research." Beekeepers don't rely on native bees, so there's no more justification for using their assessment fees on native pollinator research than for spending the money on salmon or oak habitat, he said. Funds from beekeepers — expected to amount to about \$35,000 — should be directed solely for honeybee research, he said. Committee Chair Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, said the beekeeper group could ask for amendments to the bill but cautioned that a perceived lack of consensus could imperil the legislation. Vanderpool said the current language is too divisive for the beekeeping community, which is why he broached the subject. Other agricultural entities benefit more directly from native pollinators, he said. "Those revenue sources are there to be identified and discussed." Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, said that paying for native bee science seems to be justified as there's a public interest in helping those pollinators.

Oregon's changing FFA elects new leaders

By **ERIC MORTENSON**
Capital Press

SILVERTON, Ore. — Luis Mendoza of Molalla High School and Addie Howell of Jefferson were elected president and vice president of Oregon FFA for 2015-16, and will head a student organization that is growing and changing. Given the way delegates danced to blaring hip hop music during session breaks at the state convention this past week, FFA may stand for Funky Farmers of America. Or, considering the intense interest that has led to an FFA chapter forming at a deeply urban Portland school, maybe call it Food and Fiber of America. Either way, FFA membership in Oregon is about 5,600 students, up from 4,800 a few years ago, and the organization's breakaway from state Department of Education funding has paid off in the form of industry support. The result is an organization that appears freshly vibrant while still rooted in the FFA traditions of agricultural education and leadership training. The organization's intended message hasn't changed, either, said Kevin White, executive director of the Oregon FFA Foundation. "Basically, FFA is life changing," White said. Some farmers were indifferent FFA members in high school, of course, and some weren't members at all, but others say they gained from the experience.

"It taught me the importance of a firm handshake, how to look people in the eye when talking to them, how to address people with respect and how to speak in public," Willamette Valley farmer Brenda Frketch said in response to a Facebook query. Kathy Freeborn Hadley said she and her husband, Troy, were active in FFA as high school students. Hadley said she still farms Willamette Valley fields she rented as part of her FFA project. "Probably the biggest benefit I gained was the leadership and speaking skills from attending conferences and participating in contests," she said on Facebook. It wasn't that long ago, however, that Oregon FFA faltered as public schools, cramped for money, eliminated the ag science, home economics and shop classes that often paralleled FFA involvement. In 2011, Oregon FFA became financially independent from the Oregon Department of Education and the Oregon FFA Foundation, a nonprofit, was formed to raise money from industry sponsors. White, a former California state FFA vice president and national secretary, was hired to run the foundation. White said FFA has three main components: Classroom instruction, supervised agricultural projects and leadership training. "It's not just a club on campus," he said.



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press
The 2015-16 Oregon FFA state officers are, from left: Sentinel Bailey Myers, Reporter Ricky Molitor, Treasurer Alyssa Smith, Secretary Joe Matteo, Vice President Addie Howell and President Luis Mendoza.

Rising interest in where food and fiber come from have helped the organization grow, White said. "That's only making FFA more relevant," he said. Madison High School in Northeast Portland, with a low-income, high-minority student population, recently formed a chapter. White said. Although state funding for FFA has been eliminated, school districts are beginning to re-establish career and technical education, or CTE, programs, said Reynolds Gardner, a specialist with the state education department. He credits Oregon State University's College of Agricultural Sciences with providing the "cultural lead" in reviving the programs.

Students elected to statewide office are seniors, but delay entering college to spend a year traveling the state working with local chapters. Mendoza, the newly elected president, said he met with touring state officers when he was a freshman. "That definitely inspired me," he said. "I thought, wow, I can do this. Follow your dreams, don't give up." In addition to Mendoza and Vice President Howell, other state officers are Secretary Joe Matteo of Sutherlin, Treasurer Alyssa Smith of Elkton, Reporter Ricky Molitor of Madras, and Sentinel Bailey Myers of Nyssa.

Oregon bill regulates use of livestock antibiotics

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

SALEM — Federal oversight of antibiotic use in livestock production recently sparked debate as Oregon lawmakers considered enacting state restrictions on such treatments. Proponents of House Bill 2598, which would prohibit treating livestock with "non-therapeutic" doses of antibiotics, claim the legislation is necessary because the U.S. Food and Drug Administration doesn't impose adequate limits on the drugs. Overuse of antibiotics is causing resistance among pathogens, so using the medicine to stimulate growth or to prevent disease in livestock should be stopped, said David Rosenfeld, executive director of the OSP-PIRG consumer group. Some antibiotics have already become less effective and aren't likely to be quickly replaced, he said during a March 24 hearing before the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources. "They're not being developed at the same rate we're losing them," Rosenfeld said. The legislation would not be rendered moot by the FDA's strategy of working with drug manufacturers to phase out some nontherapeutic antibiotic use in livestock by the end of 2016, Rosenfeld said. The federal program is voluntary and only ceases antibiotic treatments meant to promote growth — most nontherapeutic use is aimed at preventing diseases, so the FDA's plan is unlikely to significantly reduce overuse, he said. There's currently no federal statute restricting antibiotics in livestock production, so the FDA's approach is vulnerable to change under new presidential administrations, said Ivan Maluski, policy director

of Friends of Family Farmers, a group that supports stronger antibiotic regulations. "We're not necessarily confident the solution is going to come from Washington, D.C.," he said. The Oregon Veterinary Medical Association is also concerned about antibiotic resistance but believes HB 2598 falls short of its goals, said Chuck Meyer, the group's president. The bill would compromise animal health by banning antibiotic use for disease prevention, he said. Prevention is necessary when dealing with herds of animals rather than individual people, Meyer said. Proponents of HB 2598 oversimplify the FDA's strategy by characterizing it as "voluntary," said Richard Carnevale, vice president of regulatory, scientific and international affairs for the Animal Health Institute, which represents drug manufacturers. The pharmaceutical industry has agreed to cooperate with FDA rather having the agency go through with the formal process of disallowing certain antibiotic uses, which would drag on for years, he said. Companies are committing to antibiotic restrictions, by which veterinarians and farmers would have to abide, Carnevale said. "Once this takes place, those labels will be changed forever." Of the 18 pathogens identified by the Centers for Disease Control as posing an antibiotic resistance threat, only salmonella and campylobacter are related to animal agriculture, he said. "In the whole scheme of things, they don't represent a huge antibiotic resistance problem," Carnevale said. Apart from the ban on non-therapeutic use, HB 2598 contains other contentious provisions: confined animal feeding operations would have to report antibiotic use to state regulators

and private citizens could file lawsuits to enforce the law. Proponents of the bill say it's necessary to track antibiotic usage since the drugs could still be used on healthy animals during emergencies. As for the lawsuits, proponents say the law is meant to be "self-enforcing" and limit the role of government. Opponents counter that the recordkeeping burden for CAFOs is excessive and that the lawsuit provision will spur attorneys to seek out farmers for litigation.

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