

Washington

Governor candidate has agriculture background

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

Seattle Port Commissioner Bill Bryant is the first candidate in Washington's 2016 race for governor and hopes to gain strong support from agriculture because of his links to the industry.

Bryant, 54, of Seattle, was vice president of the Northwest Horticultural Council in Yakima from 1985 to 1992 and helped gain market access for apples in Mexico and India, cut apple tariffs in Taiwan and eliminate barriers in Scandinavia.

In 1992, he started the trade consulting firm Bryant Christie in Seattle that has worked on trade issues for tree fruit, fresh and processed potatoes, hops, wine and berries. The company grew from his basement to offices in Seattle and Sacramento with 32 employees,

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— Bill Bryant

Candidate for Washington Governor

specializing in market access, international marketing and researching and maintaining an online data base of international commodity standards.

"Agriculture will never have a governor who understands it and cares about it as much as I will," Bryant told Capital Press.

"Figuring out a long-term sustainable water plan for Central Washington is critical to keeping jobs in Washington state," he said, mentioning the Yakima Basin, Tri-Cities and Moses Lake areas. More reservoir water retention is needed, he said.

Bryant said he's inspired

to run by a Catholic priest, the late Roy Davis, who told him at the end of life "the only things that matter are lives you've touched and community you've built."

"The other person inspiring me to run is the incumbent (Gov. Jay Inslee) who is not building community but has a divisive and hyper-partisan style," Bryant said.

"I can pull people together and get things done," he said.

A Republican, Bryant downplayed party politics in a May 14 video announcing his candidacy. He said his agenda is not partisan or ideological



Photo provided
Bill Bryant, 2016 candidate for Washington governor.

but focused on helping build "solid, family-wage jobs," improving education and avoiding more taxes on middle-class families.

Bryant was encouraged to run by more than two dozen state House Republicans.

He spoke May 16 at the annual meeting of Mainstream Republicans of Washington in Leavenworth. Other potential Republican contenders for governor also spoke: Congressman Dave Reichert and

state Sens. Andy Hill, Redmond, and Steve Litzow, Mercer Island.

The same day Bryant announced for governor, a Shell Oil Co. ship arrived at the Port of Seattle to store equipment needed to drill for oil in Alaska. Bryant was criticized by environmental protesters opposed to drilling for his role as a port commissioner in leasing space to Shell.

"If I thought the Shell rig would in any way damage Puget Sound, I would be out there in a kayak (with the protesters), but it is not," he said. "Rejecting the lease won't affect Arctic drilling. President Obama is moving full steam ahead on Arctic drilling. Prohibiting Shell at our port would cost us 200 to 400 middle-class jobs. It's a choice between middle-class jobs and a symbolic statement. I chose jobs."

Shell would go to other ports in Washington, British Columbia or Alaska if Seattle rescinds its two-year lease, he said.

Bryant was born in Morton, grew up in Hoodspoint and near Olympia and received a bachelor's degree in trade and diplomacy from Georgetown University in 1983. He worked for Gov. John Spellman on trade issues.

He has been a Seattle port commissioner since 2008 but is not seeking a third term. His term expires in December. He has worked on statewide transportation and tourism issues and consolidation of the seaports of Tacoma and Seattle.

His wife, Barbara, has been executive director of the Yakima River Greenway, vice president of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and vice president of Woodland Park Zoo, both in Seattle.

Wolf legislation stalls in GOP-led Senate

Northeast Washington lawmakers disagree about bill's worth

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — A bill intended to bring relief to wolf-plagued ranchers in northeast Washington is running into criticism for being toothless and a tactical mistake.

The skepticism may prove fatal to House Bill 2107, which passed the Democratic-controlled House unanimously, but stalled in the GOP-led Senate.

The bill's prime sponsor, Republican Rep. Joel Kretz, whose 7th District has three-fourths of the state's wolf packs, said Friday he hopes the bill will regain momentum, especially among ranchers.

"It comes down to the grassroots. Do they want it or not?" he said.

HB 2107 would direct the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to re-evaluate by mid-2017 the state's recovery goals and policies on lethal control.

The 7th District's senator, Republican Brian Dinsel, said ranchers can't wait two years for WDFW to rethink wolf recovery.

"That bill wouldn't be productive for ranchers," he said. "I don't think it can just be a study bill."

The bill falls short of proposals by Kretz to de-list wolves in the eastern one-third of the state or transfer some to Western Washington to hasten recovery.

But Kretz said he hopes the review will speed up the day



A Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife file photo shows a member of the Teanaway pack. A bill to revise the state's wolf plan has stalled in the Senate.

wolves are no longer a protected species in Eastern Washington, leading to wolf management similar to Idaho. "I guess we can accept the status quo, or we can move forward. I think this moves us forward."

Washington's wolf population grew by 30 percent in 2014, but the state measures success by distribution and the increase in breeding pairs. By those measurements, the state's progress toward recovery has been slow.

The animals remain concentrated in Kretz's and Dinsel's district, and WDFW hasn't documented an increase in breeding pairs since 2012.

Meanwhile, ranchers report more livestock-wolf conflicts.

The bill had support from the Washington Cattlemen's Association and the Washing-

ton Farm Bureau. Environmental groups were cool toward reopening the wolf plan, but Democrats green-lighted the legislation after provisions were added to subject WDFW's revisions to more outside review.

Kretz said he thought the bill would cruise through the Senate, which had passed a similar bill. "Everybody thought it was on auto pilot," he said. "Nobody worked it, including me."

As the end of the regular session drew near in late April, the Farm Bureau sent out an "action alert," asking its members to urge senators to pass the bill. For now, the bill sits in the Senate Natural Resources and Parks Committee.

Dinsel cited the House vote as evidence the bill falls short of addressing wolf predation.

Rather than wait until 2017 and the possibility of change, Dinsel suggested holding out and trying again next year to de-list wolves in Eastern Washington.

"I think we have to go for something now to leverage our majority in the Senate," Dinsel said.

Said Kretz: "I'd love to see regional delisting. If you think you can get it through the House, have at it."

Stevens County rancher Scott Nielsen, former president of the Stevens County Cattlemen's Association, said he worries that reopening the wolf plan will defuse the push to de-list wolves in his corner of the state.

"If we get that (HB 2107), I have an idea our lawmakers won't do anything else," he said.

Washington's late reaction to drought revives legislation

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — A dormant bill introduced last winter to encourage policymakers to plan earlier for a drought may resurface as late-starting agencies and lawmakers hurry to catch up with a worsening water picture, particularly in the agriculture-rich Yakima Basin.

House Bill 1836 wouldn't help this year, but it might prepare officials for future droughts, the bill's prime sponsor, Bothell Rep. Derek Stanford, said Wednesday.

"I think this is a good opportunity to learn from the problems we're currently dealing with," he said. "I think it's a pretty clear lesson we can take from it. We need to be more proactive."

HB 1836 would authorize the Washington Department of Ecology to shop for irrigation water and calls for lawmakers to convene an oversight committee before the governor declares an emergency.

Gov. Jay Inslee declared a drought in about one-fifth of the state March 13. The declaration was expanded April 17 to include almost half the state. The drought declaration now includes the entire state.

With the severity of the drought becoming clear, DOE is struggling to find Yakima Basin farmers with senior rights willing to lease water to junior-right holders. More water would have been available if DOE had started the search in January or February, when low snowpacks were worrisome

but a drought was uncertain, an agency water resources manager, Dave Christensen, said.

DOE could have lined up tentative agreements and watched the weather before finalizing them, he said. "This year, we were too late before we started. (Farmers) had already made decisions," Christensen said.

Meanwhile, lawmakers have yet to act on DOE's request for \$9.6 million in drought relief funds. The request came in late March, weeks after legislators began putting together spending plans.

To increase water supplies for farms and fish, state agencies are rearranging staff assignments and borrowing money from other programs in anticipation legislators eventually will allocate the money. A program to help cities with drought-stressed water systems is on hold.

"I think (the drought response) has been hampered by the fact so many things couldn't happen until the drought declaration was made," Stanford said.

HB 1836 passed the House in early March, but stalled in the Senate. Lawmakers have a chance to revive the bill during the current special session. "If we want to be prepared for next year, we have to do it now," Stanford said.

The Legislature's drought committee chairman, Yakima Valley Sen. Jim Honeyford, remains cool to the bill. "I don't think it's a high priority because I don't think it accomplishes a whole lot," he said.

Ecology department seeks public comment on updated pollution plan

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. — The Washington De-

partment of Ecology is seeking comment about its plan to update the process it uses to address nonpoint source pollution, including pollutants

from agriculture and forestry. The public comment period runs through June 5.

Ecology representatives Kelly Susewind and Ben Rau said during a public meeting May 12 the plan does not call for increasing enforcement. The state is working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to find gaps in addressing pollution.

"We've been told by EPA we need better defined management practices of what works and what doesn't," Susewind said. "This plan identifies the process to develop those. If I were a rancher, I'd be paying attention to that process."

The department will submit its plan to EPA by the end of June.

Rau said the department will emphasize education and outreach through local conservation

districts and producer groups.

Medical Lake, Wash., rancher Craig Grub asked whether the department would use DNA testing to determine whether a site is polluted by livestock or wildlife.

Susewind said DNA testing is expensive and requires a large number of samples over time. The department occasionally uses it, but there is not a lab-approved, certified technology to use it in a regulatory manner, he said.

"It's not the absolute fingerprint everybody hopes it is," he said.

Susewind said he disagrees with producers' assumption that there isn't science without sampling.

"Science is broader than chemistry, but we do use chemistry as well," he said. "We agree, we need a broad scale of sam-



Washington Department of Ecology water quality representative Ben Rau talks about the department's nonpoint source pollution plan update, currently up for public comment through June 5, during a meeting May 12 in Spokane Valley, Wash.

pling to understand where the pollution's coming from, when it's there, when it's not."

Ecology's agriculture and water quality advisory committee is reviewing a draft guidance document, Susewind said.

"That's based on a huge body of science that shows you can with visual indicators determine whether there is a source of pollution or not," he said. "That is science. The visuals will say this is a source of pollution — it

doesn't tell you how much of a source it is, what other sources are in the watershed. It's not the end of the work."

Grub said his concerns weren't eased by the meeting.

"If it takes five years to get valid scientific data, they should take the five years," he said. "It's not observation."

Colfax, Wash., rancher Tom Kammerzell was pleased Ecology was communicating with ranchers.

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