

Oregon

Farmland trails bill dies in committee

Legislation would have increased government scrutiny

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

A bill aimed at expanding government oversight of "rails-to-trails" across farmland in Oregon, intended to prevent disruptions to agriculture, has died in committee.

House Bill 3367 would have required conditional use permits for certain projects in farm zones, such as converting railroad tracks to bike paths, which would allow

neighboring farmers to weigh in on such proposals.

The Oregon Farm Bureau and conservation groups supported the bill, arguing that dealing with ongoing public recreation poses a much greater challenge for farmers than the passage of an occasional trail.

Growers know when trails will travel across their property and can plan their operations accordingly, but

they face greater difficulties when spraying, tilling or moving livestock near bikers and other visitors, proponents of HB 3367 said.

The Oregon Recreation and Park Association opposed the original version of the bill for allegedly threatening to interfere with a process that's successfully created hundreds of miles of trails in the state.

Trails rarely encounter the

type of problems anticipated by farmers, opponents of HB 3367 said.

Even trails that cross the farmland of willing landowners would be subject to greater scrutiny by county governments under the bill, ORPA said.

"Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water," said Stephanie Redman, the group's executive director, during a recent legislative hearing.

The original version of HB 3367 passed the House by a

strong margin, but during Senate hearings, ORPA pressed for an amendment that would only require permits when the land is acquired through eminent domain.

Representatives of Oregon's Department of Land Conservation and Development testified that permits are already required for certain trails, though not those which modify existing transportation easements.

Several park officials, however, told lawmakers that this process hasn't been followed

uniformly across the state.

In the end, the Senate Committee on Environment decided to let the bill die during a May 27 work session rather than schedule further deliberations.

Cindy Robert, lobbyist for the ORPA, said the concept isn't necessarily a "dud" but more time is needed to clarify existing regulations and how they've been applied.

Hopefully, a solution that makes sense for everyone can be found during a future legislative session, she said.



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Bruce Dausavage of Ochoco Lumber Co., left, and environmental law attorney Susan Jane Brown discuss forest policy collaboration during a May 27 symposium in Portland.

Portland panelists back collaborative approach to forest policy

By **ERIC MORTENSON**
Capital Press

PORTLAND — The unexpected collaboration of industry, environmentalists and government agencies that saved mill jobs in Oregon's Grant County could be a model for restoration forest policy elsewhere, panelists said at a May 27 timber symposium.

Working with the U.S. Forest Service, the Blue Mountains Forest Partners forged a 10-year agreement to restore 272,000 acres of the Malheur National Forest through thinning projects and other work. The work, funded by a \$2.5 million allocation from USDA, provides logging and mill jobs, reduces fire danger and improves the ecosystem, panelists at the Forests and the Economy Symposium said.

"We had the idea we were the smartest guys in the room," said Bruce Dausavage, president of Ochoco Lumber Co. "When we hit the wall a couple years ago, we needed help."

The company in 2012 announced it would close its John Day sawmill because it could not get a sufficient supply of logs from the national forest. The mill was Grant County's biggest private employer, providing 70 to 80 jobs in a county of 1,700 people, and the prospect of clo-

sure was grim news.

But the potential job losses, combined with issues of forest health and the prospect of catastrophic fire in overgrown woods, provided common ground for finding a solution, panelists agreed.

The agreement, essentially science-based, long-term landscape management contracts, required Ochoco Lumber to make some changes, Dausavage said.

"I have to take that science and figure out how to make a profit with it," he said. "We go out in the woods and figure out what will work."

Processing and marketing small logs removed during thinning work is "always a challenge," Dausavage said. The company invested \$12 million in new facilities. It installed a whole log shaver, which produces shavings for use as animal bedding, and added the capacity to make wood chips or compressed wood bricks for heating.

In joining partners such as Sustainable Northwest and the Western Environmental Law Center, the company "opened ourselves up," Dausavage said. "We will never get everything we want, but what we've got going right now is wonderful."

"They gave up management as usual and embraced a (forest) restoration ap-

proach," said Susan Jane Brown, staff attorney with the law center.

The approach was different for the law center, as well. "I'm a litigator. My day job is suing the Forest Service and BLM (Bureau of Land Management) over forest practices," Brown quipped. The task of "bringing science to the table" involved experts and community stakeholders going out on the ground where forest policy issues are coming up, she said.

Dausavage, Brown and Patrick Shannon, forest program director with Sustainable Northwest, said collaboration may work in Eastern Oregon because so many involved in forest policy issues, from all sides, have hit bottom and are looking for solutions.

"Industry wasn't seeing logs come off (the national forests) and my side wasn't seeing old growth protection," Brown said.

Other issues covered during the symposium included panel discussions of the "missing middle" in forest policy and the cost of wildfire suppression.

The event was hosted by InvestigateWest, a nonprofit investigative newsroom, and the University of Oregon's School of Journalism and Communications.

Sharp eyespot reappears in Willamette Valley wheat

By **MITCH LIES**
For the Capital Press

Oregon State University plant pathologist Chris Mundt reported at the Hyslop Farm Field Day May 27 that sharp eyespot is back infecting Willamette Valley wheat, and doesn't appear to be leaving any time soon.

"We were hoping it would go away," Mundt said, "but that's not the case."

Sharp eyespot appeared in the valley at unheard of levels last year, causing yield losses as high as 50 percent in one field and between 10 and 20 percent in others, according to Mundt.

The disease was indiscriminate last year, appearing in wheat fields up and down the valley and on nearly all the common varieties, he said.

This year appears no different. Sharp eyespot is just as prominent, he said, and has been spotted in Central Oregon wheat stands as well, dousing hopes that last year's outbreak was an anomaly that wouldn't be repeated.

Mundt said he is finding it in every clump of wheat he pulls up in the valley.

Plants infected with the dis-



Mitch Lies/For the Capital Press

Oregon State University plant pathologist Chris Mundt speaks to participants at the Hyslop Farm Field Day May 27 about the prevalence of sharp eyespot in Willamette Valley wheat.

ease will exhibit black areas on stems, Mundt said, and at high infestation levels will lodge.

Mundt is speculating that a new strain, or population, of the sharp eyespot fungus, *Rhizoctonia cerealis*, is responsible for the infestation. He said literature shows it also is appearing in China.

The disease has appeared sparingly in the valley over the years, Mundt said, but never at high levels.

Among research being conducted on the disease, researchers are studying whether certain

fungicides, such as the strobilurins, are effective at controlling it. "We'll know at the end of this year," Mundt said.

Researchers also are planning to put out trials this fall to study whether delaying planting can lower plant susceptibility.

Mundt also reported that barley yellow dwarf virus is appearing at unusually high levels in Willamette Valley wheat this year.

"This is the worst barley yellow dwarf I've ever seen in the valley," he said.

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Feds disburse \$20M to Ore. timber areas

GRANTS PASS, Ore. (AP) — Checks totaling \$20 million are being sent to 18 timber counties in western Oregon under terms of a federal subsidy renewed by Congress.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management announced Thursday that the money is being distributed to the so-called O&C counties under terms of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act.

The counties once received so much money as a share of logging on the so-called O&C lands that some didn't have to levy taxes. But when logging was drastically cut in the 1990s to protect the northern spotted owl and salmon, Congress created a series of safety nets. The latest one had expired, but was revived by Congress.

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