

## Oregon

# Judge says 'no' to motorized vehicles for juniper removal in wilderness

Nearly 80,000 acres declared off-limits for helping sage grouse recovery

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

A federal judge has ruled that it's unlawful to use motorized vehicles to remove juniper from nearly 80,000 acres in the vicinity of Oregon's Steens Mountain.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management is cutting juniper from roughly 336,000 acres in the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management Area because the trees are crowding out native vegetation.

Juniper removal is important to ranchers because it's

expected to prevent further population declines of the sage grouse, a candidate for Endangered Species Act protection.

If the bird is listed as threatened or endangered, ranchers fear further restrictions on cattle grazing in its habitat.

U.S. District Judge Garr King has now ruled that using motorized vehicles within "wilderness study areas" is prohibited by a federal law that governs management of the Steens Mountain area.

The BLM argued that there's an exception to the vehicle ban for "administrative

purposes" — including juniper removal — but King sided with the Oregon Natural Desert Association, which filed a lawsuit against the practice.

The judge said that BLM was interpreting the "administrative purposes" language too broadly.

"The BLM's interpretation places no limit on what falls in the category of 'administrative,'" he said. "BLM — as the agency charged with implementing Congress' enactments — could call any activity 'administrative' since its job is to 'administer' the laws."

Supporters of juniper removal worry that the ruling will complicate activities within the 79,600 acres designated as "wilderness study

areas" inside the project's boundaries.

John O'Keefe, president-elect of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, said the task of removing juniper from enormous swaths of land is difficult enough without onerous restrictions on equipment.

"We've got to use the most efficient means we can. These laws can be problematic from time to time," he said.

It's unfortunate ONDA wants to limit such tools, as juniper removal is beneficial to the ecosystem that the group wants protected, O'Keefe said.

"To do this effectively, we have to do this fairly large-scale," he said.

Dan Morse, ONDA's con-



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press file

A mature juniper tree lies where it was cut. A federal judge has ruled that motorized vehicles cannot be used to aid in juniper removal if it takes place within a wilderness area.

servation director, said the group's lawsuit was intended to enforce the intentions of Congress when it banned motorized vehicles in wilderness study areas.

The vehicle prohibition is meant to preserve the values of solitude and dispersed recreation, as well as prevent soil disturbances, he said.

Juniper treatments can continue with people on the ground, rather than heavy machinery and all-terrain vehicles, Morse said. "We don't oppose the project's basic purpose."

## Grass seed, wine grape growers discuss herbicide drift answers

By MITCH LIES  
For the Capital Press

AMITY, Ore. — Grass seed farmer Denny Wilfong was enthused to learn that the Oregon Seed Council and the Oregon Winegrowers Association were organizing a tour to address issues of herbicide drift between grass seed fields and vineyards. So much so, in fact, that Wilfong volunteered to host the first stop on the Aug. 19 tour.

"What it boils down to, is the Willamette Valley is blessed with weather that allows us to produce the best grass seed, wine grapes and blueberries in the world," Wilfong said. "We're really fortunate. So we just have to figure out a way to make it all work together and make it all fit."

On the tour, chemical dealers, licensed pesticide applicators, grass seed and wine grape growers addressed a gathering of legislators, state agency officials, county commissioners, extension agents, timber owners and others.

Wilfong, of Wilfong Farms in Dallas, Ore., said he takes several steps to avoid damaging wine grapes when spraying broadleaf herbicides. Among them, he, at times, sprays at less than optimum timing to avoid applying compounds during bud break in grapes,



Mitch Lies/For the Capital Press  
Wine grape grower Bill Sweat, in a vineyard outside Amity, Ore., on Aug. 19, addresses participants during a farm tour that was arranged to help wine grape and grass seed growers co-exist.

uses nonvolatile formulations of herbicides and adds anti-drift agents to tankmixes.

Katie Fast, a neighbor of Wilfong, said she and her husband, Kirk, alert neighboring wine grape grower Dave Coelho when they are going to spray, and tell him what compounds they plan to apply.

"Working with our neighbors cooperatively is very important to us," Fast said. "It is time that we are taking out of our day, and it takes effort, but I think it is important."

Coelho told participants he appreciates hearing from the Fasts, particularly during bud break.

Wine grapes are susceptible to herbicide injury at several points during a growing season, said Alex Cabrera of the OVS subsidiary Results Partners, but never more so than during bud break.

Injury at that point not only affects the current year's grape crop, but also the next year's crop and possibly subsequent years' crops, he said.

"That early-season is very delicate," Cabrera said.

Cabrera's presentation at the second stop on the tour was followed by a presentation from Bill Hubbell, general manager of Wilco-Winfield. Hubbell showed growers examples of application technology available to reduce herbicide drift, including interlock nozzles.

"You still have wind issues to deal with," Hubbell said, "but you can get a lot more control of your application."

Bob Eccles of Wilbur-Ellis

Co. told participants the optimal conditions for spraying are when wind is blowing away from sensitive areas at a speed of between 4 and 10 mph. At less than 4 mph, the chances of volatilization are increased, and drift issues come into play when applying pesticides at wind speeds in excess of 10 mph, he said.

Eccles also advised growers to read pesticide labels.

"There is a lot of new information on those labels," he said, including information on how droplet size can affect spray quality, and other tidbits growers can use to their advantage."

Oregon Department of Agriculture Director Katy Coba, who participated in the tour, said she was pleased to see the wine grape and grass seed growers working to resolve what at times has been a contentious issue.

"I think that both sides are to be commended to be willing to talk to each other about their concerns and take the next step to do this tour," she said.

"Our whole focus is co-existence," she said. "The best people to solve these issues are the people that are out on the ground."

## Oregon's Mount Emily wolves strike once more

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

For the second time in August and third time since June, Oregon's Mount Emily wolf pack is blamed for killing a sheep in the northeast corner of the state.

A herder on Aug. 15 found a partially consumed sheep in a timbered area of Nine Mile Ridge, in Umatilla County. The site was near a bedding ground on public land.

Wildlife biologists examined the carcass. The sheep's stomach and thoracic cavity had been eaten, as had muscle and tissue from the neck, ribs, shoulders and front legs. Bite mark size and placement were consistent with a wolf attack, according to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

GPS data from a collared wolf showed at least one pack member was in the area when the attack most likely occurred. Previous ODFW investigations showed pack members killed sheep Aug. 4 and June 22.

## Family nursery specializes in water gardens

By GAIL OBERST  
For the Capital Press

INDEPENDENCE, Ore. — The Matteo family's Independence Nursery and Water Gardens specializes in plants and fish that suit water features, but it didn't start out that way.

Marylou started the business in 1987 with Ash Creek in her backyard. Her husband, the late Joe Matteo, joined the business a few years later. In 2003, their son, Ed, a retired Navy Seabee, joined the business with his wife, April.

The Matteos started the nursery without specific specialties, but as demand and

their own interests grew, they quickly gravitated to water plants and related accessories. Inside the business building are aquariums full of pond-loving fish and the accessories needed to maintain water features, plants and fish. Outside, the nursery displays hundreds of plants that grow in water on the edges of ponds.

The Matteos' small nursery on the border between Monmouth and Independence is a mecca for the area's water-feature lovers. While there is a variety of shrubs and trees at Independence Nursery, most of these serve to provide shade and

shelter for the water ponds.

For example, there are about 25 varieties of maples for sale, and more than 70 varieties of shade-loving hosta, some of which the Matteos have propagated since they opened.

"Mom loved the hosta," said Ed, pulling out the variegated "Independence" hosta, a variety the nursery has carried since 2006.

There are 25 varieties of water lilies for sale in colors pink, white, yellow, red and even some that change colors during the course of the day. Plantain lilies, water hyacinth, rushes, cattails, dwarf water bamboo,

reeds, wapato, and more are available in the nursery's six greenhouses. Demonstration ponds are scattered throughout the nursery, some filled with gambusia or mosquito fish, the perfect pet for the Oregon water feature, Ed said. The fish don't have to be fed, and they tolerate extreme temperatures, from hot to cold.

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## Slug researcher will speak at meetings

By MITCH LIES  
For the Capital Press

In 2009, Pennsylvania State University entomologist John Tooker said he "naively waded into the slug world" after slug problems were the topic of 50 percent of his extension calls that year.

Today Tooker is one of the few U.S. researchers actively engaged in slug research.

Tooker will be a featured speaker at the Oregon State University seed crop and cereal production meetings in September.

Tooker also will speak at a seminar on the OSU campus, scheduled from 3 to 4 p.m. on Sept. 9 in room 4000 of the Agriculture and Life Sciences Building.

Sujay Rao, field crop entomologist at Oregon State University, said that while Mid-Atlantic cropping patterns are different from Oregon's, she believes Tooker can provide Oregon growers valuable insight on a problem that has

beset them in recent years.

An industry study recently calculated the economic impact of slugs on Oregon grass seed crops at just under \$100 million annually, or about 20 percent of the crops' farm gate value.

"Clearly slugs are a big issue, and John Tooker is one of the few researchers nationwide who is doing research on slugs," Rao said. "This seemed like a good opportunity to bring him to Oregon."

In a Penn State University Department of Entomology research report, Tooker noted that a 2010 survey of Mid-Atlantic corn and soybean growers, showed that 82 percent of respondents identified slugs as their most challenging pest.

The report also included findings that cover crops, including cereal rye and clovers, helped limit slug damage by providing alternative feed sources for slugs. And it included information that minimal tillage — even light discing in the spring — helped

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