

Urban-rural divide over guns mirrors disagreements over farming practices

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and La Grande before Albany. He's spent plenty of time in Portland and Salem. He guesses the urban-rural divide in Oregon isn't much different than a lot of other states.

"I think typically the notion is, and I'm sure it's true, in predominantly rural places people are more concerned about gun rights, more interested in them and more concerned about intrusion" on those rights, Hare said.

Part of that attitude comes from heritage. Many rural Westerners grew up handling guns at relatively young ages. Tap a current or former country boy of a certain age and he'll tell you of the single-shot .22 rifle leaning against the wall in the closet. Squirrels beware.

"When I was a kid," Hare said, "you could go out in the country and shoot a gun, and it wouldn't cause much of a stir — in part because there weren't as many people around.

"If you live on a ranch, who cares if you shoot a gun?" Hare said. "You won't hit anything."

Hare had a .22 for plinking and a Winchester .308 for hunting deer. Gun ownership was part of the culture.

"That doesn't mean there weren't problems with guns," he said. An eighth grade classmate was accidentally shot and killed by his father while hunting. A kid living nearby was shot by his brother but survived. A friend's father committed suicide with a gun. An elderly neighbor shot his wife, then killed himself.

"Guns were very much part of the culture, but so were gun deaths," Hare said.

Senior Trooper Kreg Coggins, who works from the Oregon State Police outpost in Enterprise, in Oregon's northeast corner, said he interacts with armed, legal hunters 12 months of the year.

"I'm somewhat de-sensitized to people who have guns," he said. "It's kind of odd for them *not* to have guns."

Means of protection

In the rural West, help from sheriff's deputies or state troopers may be spread thin and miles distant.

Some residents, it's fair to say, own guns and keep them handy out of a belief that they may need to protect themselves, their families and their livestock, equipment, crops or other valuables.

Two-legged troublemakers are a worry, but many rural Westerners also share the landscape with coyotes, cougars, wolves or bears.

Eastern Idaho rancher Brian Mays, who leases a 300-acre private pasture southeast of Henry's Lake, estimates grizzlies have killed 14 of his cows in the past four years — four this season. He recently rounded up some heavily-armed compatriots to help him scour



Nick Goit, owner of Eastern Oregon Tactical, puts up a U.S. flag outside his store front while opening up the shop Tuesday in Hermiston, Ore. He carries a weapon with him through the day.



Nick Goit, owner of Eastern Oregon Tactical, unlocks a cage covering a display of rifles while getting his shop ready for business Tuesday in Hermiston, Ore. He carries a weapon with him through the day.

the brush for cattle, or bears.

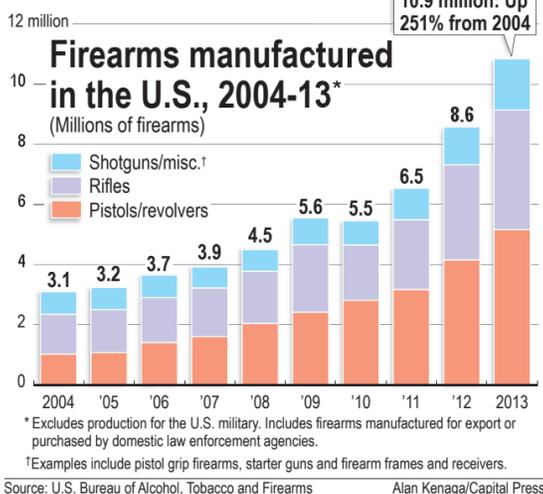
"They're not the warm fuzzy creatures everybody seems to think they are," Mays said. "If urban people could see how vicious they are with their prey when they kill them, it might wake them up."

Urban reality

It's different in cities. Some urban areas put up with the occasional cougar scare or coyotes carrying off cats, but most city wildlife encounters involve raccoons or possums, not wolves or grizzlies.

Gang shootouts are a danger in some city neighborhoods. The presence of unruly street kids and unkempt homeless people, some of them clearly mentally ill, may add to urban unease about weapons or an interest in possessing them.

The Oregonian newspaper reported in 2013 that 1-in-16



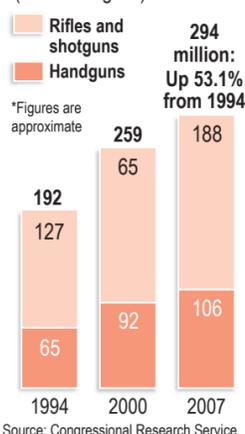
Oregonians held a concealed handgun license, or CHL. At one point in the early 2000s in Gresham, a Portland suburb, two members of the city council

and its city manager held CHLs.

Open carry is legal in Portland, but guns must be unloaded unless the carrier has

Gun ownership in the U.S.

(Millions of guns)



a concealed handgun license, Portland Police Bureau spokesman Sgt. Pete Simpson said in an email.

Portland police have responded to 911 calls involving people who were openly carrying firearms, Simpson said. Statistics on the number of such calls are not readily available, but Simpson said officers respond based on information they receive. Open-carry advocates such as Goit, the Hermiston gun shop owner, might not be received calmly in cities.

"It is problematic in an urban environment," Simpson said, "as it's not something people are used to seeing and arguably could put the carrier at risk from another carrier who may perceive a threat."

Armed with statistics

A report released in August by the Pew Research Center, based in Washington, D.C., documented the urban-rural

differences. Of people living in urban areas, 60 percent believe it's more important to control gun ownership and 38 percent believe gun rights should take priority. The results are reversed in rural areas, with 63 percent saying gun rights are more important. Suburban residents were evenly divided on the question.

The question of whether to ban the sale of military-style assault weapons also illustrates the divide. Sixty-two percent of urban residents favor a ban, while agreement drops to 56 percent of suburban residents and 48 percent of rural residents, according to the Pew report.

But a greater percentage of rural and suburban residents — 80 percent and 81 percent, respectively, compared to 76 percent of urban residents — believe mentally ill people should be banned from having guns.

Interestingly, the U.S. firearm homicide rate has been steadily dropping since 1993, according to the Pew study. Homicides involving firearms accounted for seven deaths per 100,000 people in 1993, but dropped to 3.6 per 100,000 people by 2010, according to the study. Suicides account for 60 percent of firearms deaths nationally, and about 75 percent in Oregon, according to the group Ceasefire Oregon.

The group, based in Portland, describes itself as opposing gun violence and advocating for reasonable gun control laws. Among other things, Ceasefire Oregon hosts voluntary gun turn-in events that since 1994 have resulted in more than 7,800 weapons being turned in and destroyed.

Common ground

Executive Director Penny Okamoto said the urban-rural gun divide is not as deep as groups such as the National Rifle Association would have people believe.

The vast majority of gun owners support background checks, safe storage of weapons and suicide prevention programs, Okamoto said.

Ceasefire Oregon also advocates a ban on high-capacity magazines and a limit of one gun purchase a month to prevent trafficking, she said.

"We have a lot of common ground," Okamoto said. "People are not opposed to responsible gun ownership, and that's the vast majority of gun owners."

"There are a lot of things we can do to reduce gun violence and stay well within the Second Amendment," she said.

"I tell people gun violence is like cancer," she said. "There are a lot of different kinds of cancer, and a lot of different kinds of gun violence."

"You can't cure all cancer with one pill, and you can't kill gun violence with one law or one education program."

Organic groups once praised McEvoy

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Among the 14 plaintiffs were the Comucopia Institute, the Organic Consumers Association and the environmental groups Center for Food Safety, Beyond Pesticides and Food & Water Watch.

A federal judge recently dismissed the case, ruling the plaintiffs lacked legal standing to challenge the rule, but they will be allowed to re-file their complaint to correct the issues identified by the judge.

The dispute over synthetic materials is just one example of heavy-handedness during McEvoy's tenure at USDA, Kastel said.

Kastel said McEvoy has disregarded recommendations by NOSB to prohibit the use of nanotechnology and hydroponics in organic production, failed to sufficiently investigate large livestock farms for compliance with organic rules and concealed the identities of scientists who review the safety of materials.

It's possible that McEvoy

is simply carrying out orders from USDA leaders, but he is implementing these policies with zeal and a "big smile on his face," Kastel said.

"We have a government agency operating by fiat," said Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides. "Miles just happens to be the man at the helm."

Beyond Pesticides is involved in another lawsuit against McEvoy and USDA that alleges the agency has unlawfully permitted compost that's contaminated with pesticides to be used in organic production.

A federal judge recently rejected USDA's motion to dismiss the case.

Feldman said the National Organic Program under the Bush administration ignored recommendations by NOSB but at least followed procedures that allowed for public input on policies.

The situation under the Obama administration is "clearly worse. It's a clear vi-

olation of process and law," he said. "This is just bad for business because it undercuts public trust."

It appears that McEvoy is acting at the behest of large corporations that want to capitalize on the growing popularity of organics, said Barry Flamm, a former chairman of the NOSB who once considered McEvoy a "breath of fresh air."

"Organic has grown. It has become a money-maker," said Flamm.

McEvoy's policies seem aimed at removing obstacles to the way he wants to run the National Organic Program, such as when he disbanded a key policy-setting committee, stripped the NOSB of the ability to set its own agenda and otherwise undermined the board's authority.

"I was totally shocked, surprised and angry," Flamm said. "They really cut back on the public transparency. All these changes were made unilaterally."

Proposal would take away grazing land from ranchers

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"There are cattle everywhere out there," Skinner said. "If you take cattle out of (this) economy, you have decimated the economy. It would change our way of life. Not only farmers and ranchers, but everybody around here is up in arms about it."

Malheur County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager Linda Rowe, who opposes the monument proposal, said that 2.5 million acres would equal 43 percent of the county.

If the county's economically vital cattle industry was devastated by it, a lot of hay, corn and other grains wouldn't be grown here, she said.

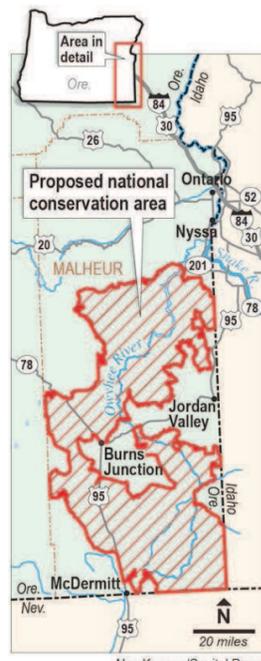
"It would impact agriculture in Malheur County as a whole," Rowe said.

Local elected officials and

members of Oregon's congressional delegation are holding a town hall meeting on the issue Oct. 29 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the Adrian High School gymnasium.

ONDA and other regional and national conservation groups and businesses are gathering signatures to back their effort. According to ONDA's web site, "a variety of legislative and administrative options (are) being considered to permanently protect this place."

According to a news release from Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, it is anticipated the groups are planning to ask President Barack Obama to use his power under the Antiquities Act to designate the land as a national monument, wilderness area or national conservation area.



Alan Kenaga/Capital Press