

Scenic status recommended for two Oregon rivers

If finalized, the designations could restrict land uses and new water rights

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

Oregon's Molalla and Chetco rivers are one step closer to state designations as scenic waterways, which could limit new

water rights and restrict land uses along their shores.

The Oregon Water Resources Commission voted on Nov. 20 to recommend the scenic river designations to Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, who is expected to make a decision in January 2016.

If Brown approves the designations, they can still be overturned by state lawmakers if they pass legislation reversing the actions.

Oregon hasn't designated

any new scenic rivers since 1988, but state agencies now plan to evaluate nominations on a regular basis, said Chris Havel, associate director of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

The commission overseeing OPRD signed off on the scenic designations before they were referred to the Oregon Water Resources Commission.

If scenic designations for the Molalla and Chetco rivers are finalized, landowners would

have to obtain permits from OPRD before logging, mining or building structures within a quarter-mile of their banks.

Only a portion of the rivers would be designated as scenic, however, and landowners can negotiate with OPRD about mitigating negative scenic impacts of the activity, Havel said.

If the agency isn't able to reach an agreement with the landowner, it can delay the planned activity by a year, he

said. Some jurisdictions, however, may refuse to issue necessary permits unless OPRD approves of the project.

The Grande Ronde River was also considered for a scenic designation, but OPRD rejected the idea due to limited public access and strong local opposition, Havel said.

Local landowners largely supported the designations for the Molalla and Chetco rivers, said Rachel Lovellford, a hydrologist for the Oregon Water

Resources Department.

During its Nov. 20 meeting, the Oregon Water Resources Commission also approved annually protecting more than 1 million acre feet of water in the Chetco River and 300,000 acre feet in the Molalla River to ensure scenic flows.

The allocation for scenic flows doesn't affect existing water rights, but could limit new water right permits within the designated area or upriver from it, Lovellford said.

Vole problems mount in Eastern Idaho

By **JOHN O'CONNELL**
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — Eastern Idaho alfalfa producers are mulling options to better control a vole outbreak that has already forced some growers to pull fields out of hay prematurely.

Following consecutive mild winters and another mild fall, voles have been prolific throughout the state, but especially in Eastern Idaho's no-till and alfalfa fields, where their burrows are left in tact.

University of Idaho Extension cereals educator John Hogge said he's fielded several calls from alfalfa growers seeking advice on protecting crops from voles, which haven't been held in check by zinc phosphide, the region's rodenticide of choice.

Hogge said growers have started discussions about forming emergency vole abatement districts. Some have also contacted the Idaho State Department of Agriculture about the need for emergency labels for additional vole-control products.

Hogge estimated the cost of buying and applying zinc phosphide at \$20 per acre and said some growers have made three or four applications, with little impact.

"We're just not seeing a lot of kill with it," Hogge said.

Hogge believes abatement districts would provide resources to help farmers address future vole problems, including funds, a greater focus on research and coordination of efforts to find more effective treatment options.

Terreton grower Steve Shively anticipates having to tear out a no-till winter wheat field next spring due to heavy vole damage. He's been making phone calls recently advocating for some kind of emergency vole disaster declaration.

Eastern Idaho grower Will Ricks, president of the Idaho Hay and Forage Association, said voles will be a major topic when his board meets on Dec. 11. He supports pursuing abatement districts, believing the alfalfa industry benefits the state's overall economy and public assistance is appropriate.

"It's getting to the epidem-



Courtesy of University of Idaho

This Jefferson County alfalfa field in Eastern Idaho has been riddled with vole damage. Growers are mulling additional ways to address the most extreme vole pressure the region has ever faced.

ic stage. It's the worst I've ever seen," Ricks said.

Ricks estimates voles have cut yields by 35 percent in some of his alfalfa fields. He said some growers in the Blackfoot area have already taken out alfalfa a couple of years ahead of schedule.

Ultimately, Ricks explained winter weather conditions will have the greatest effect on vole numbers. The ideal weather scenario would involve receiving about 4

inches of snow, which would melt suddenly, allowing water to fill vole holes, and then refreeze as ice.

Lloyd Knight, with ISDA, said growers have contacted his agency about obtaining emergency special needs labels to use zinc phosphide in triticale and another rodenticide approved only in field borders, called Rozol, for general field use. Knight said ISDA has received no requests yet from product reg-

istrants, which is a mandatory step in the process.

Idaho requires abatement districts to be created at the county level. County commissioners are allowed to create emergency, temporary abatement districts, but the districts must ultimately be ratified by a public vote. That might be a heavy lift, said Bingham County Commissioner Mark Bair.

"I don't know how we would do that," Bair said.

Top U.S. beef export markets, Jan.-Sept. 2015

Country	Quantity (U.S. tons)			Value (\$1,000)		
	Jan.-Sept. 2014	Jan.-Sept. 2015	Percent change	Jan.-Sept. 2014	Jan.-Sept. 2015	Percent change
Japan	174,894	147,915	-15%	983,103	809,628	-18%
S. Korea	88,287	94,973	8	567,694	582,073	3
Canada	108,399	94,243	-13	775,040	683,607	-12
Mexico	118,104	90,844	-24	682,106	599,821	-12
Hong Kong	102,142	79,257	-30	752,505	537,021	-29
World total	708,733	648,768	-13	4.6 million	4.1 million	-10

Source: USDA, compiled by U.S. Meat Export Federation

Capital Press graphic

Strong dollar, faltering economies challenge U.S. meat exports

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

A strong U.S. dollar, weakening foreign economies and stiff competition have made it an uphill climb for U.S. meat exports in retaining market share, but 2016 has a brighter outlook.

Beef exports were down 13 percent in volume and 10 percent in value year over year in the first nine months of the year and while pork exports held steady in quantity, they were down 16 percent in value, according to USDA statistics compiled by the U.S. Meat Export Federation.

"We're dealing in a marketplace internationally that's been shrinking for the last couple of years. This is a trend that hopefully will be reversed in 2016, but it's been a tough year," SMEF President and CEO Phil Seng said in a media call last week from the organization's strategic planning conference in Tucson.

Global beef trade is expected to be valued at just over \$34 billion in 2015, down from \$36.7 billion in 2014. Worldwide pork trade of muscle cuts is projected at \$14 billion, down from about \$16.5 billion last year, according to USMEF.

"But I still would say the benefits of international trade are still paramount and very much in the eyes of the producers and the whole fabric of the industry," he said.

In 2014, the value of exports brought \$286 per head to U.S. beef producers and close to \$50 per head to pork producers, he said.

"So the dividends of the international marketplace I think are still very, very dramatic," he said.

Zeroing in on beef, exports to Japan and Hong Kong declined drastically in the first nine months of the year. They were down by nearly 24,475 metric tons to Japan and 30,241 metric tons to Hong Kong, for a loss of \$173.5 million and \$115.5 million, respectively, according to USMEF.

Part of the problem in Japan is the serious competitive disadvantage the U.S. faces compared with Australia, which enjoys a 10 percent lower tariff on beef, said John Haggard, USMEF senior vice president, Asia Pacific.

On top of that was the port strike on the West Coast, which caused a sinking of chilled shipments to Japan in the first quarter of the year, which are going to be difficult to makeup, he said.

As for China, it presents an uneven picture of economic and commodity weakness and strong demand. While all the restaurants aren't full all the time anymore, food service receipts are growing at a robust average of 7 percent to 8 percent annually, he said.

That's driving record beef imports into China. Brazil has re-established access there and it — along with Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina — is seeing near-record volumes of beef product moving to China. In addition, Australian is taking advantage of its recent free trade agreement and has started to ship live cattle there, he said.

One bright spot in the region is recovery of beef exports to South Korea after a tumultuous history of the U.S. trying to gain access and consumer confidence. This year has been the best year in terms of restored consumer confidence, and the numbers show it, he said.

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