

# Oregon

## Shop supervisor's creations power ag center's experiments

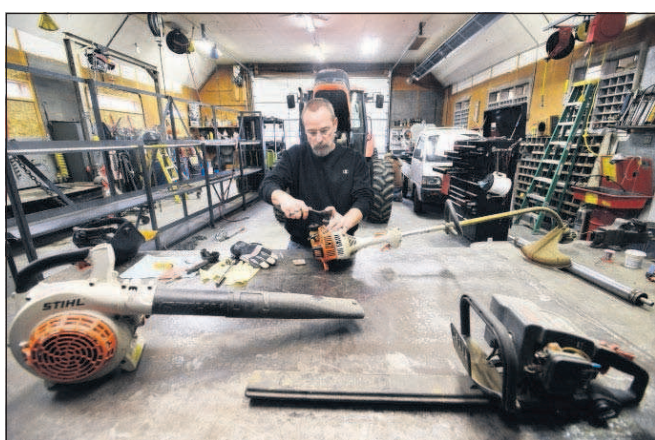
By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
EO Media Group

Winter is a time of relative calm at the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center. It will likely be months before scientists can return to the fields and begin recording data from their experiments.

In his shop around back of the station, Paul Thorgersen is busy as ever. The smell of diesel fuel lingers in the air as Thorgersen and Duane Davies finish overhauling tractors for the coming season. Thorgersen plans to build a new no-till seed drill sometime later this month, along with anything else staff might need before the weather turns.

As the maintenance and equipment supervisor at CBA C, part of Thorgersen's job is tinkering with machinery and coming up with designs that help researchers work better, faster. Farmers depend on the station to help them grow healthier crops, and Thorgersen is the "mad mechanic" behind the scenes.

Whether it's a specialized drill or modified rig for spraying fertilizer, scientists let Thorgersen know what they need and will usually give him free rein to bring the cre-



E.J. Harris/EO Media Group

Shop manager Paul Thorgersen performs routine maintenance on a weed whacker at his shop at the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center outside Pendleton.

ations to life.

They'll bring me their idea, and it's my job to figure out how to build it," he said. Sometimes they bring plans, sometimes they don't. It's a great challenge.

On a cold, rainy Tuesday, Thorgersen put the finishing touches on metal shelving welded from scratch. These shelves will hold long-term soil samples taken from the fields, to be stored in two empty shipping containers after mice started causing problems in a nearby barn.

Thorgersen, 61, grew up in Pendleton and taught himself

much of what he knows about handiwork. He learned basic carpentry from his father, and as a kid got into small motors by taking apart lawn mowers.

Thorgersen got his first truck, a 1970 Chevy pickup, when he was 14. The rig had a blown head gasket and bad clutch, but Thorgersen and friends soon got it running.

"I can't remember not mechanizing," he said. "I enjoy working with my hands."

Thorgersen never went to school for mechanics. He spent 19 years working for John Deere, and eventually worked his way up to shop

foreman and head combine mechanic. Thorgersen briefly started his own business, Paul's Combine Repair, before moving on to the maintenance shop at CBA C.

CBA C is one of several agricultural research stations operated by Oregon State University around the state. The Pendleton station is located several miles north of town, and is dedicated to helping local wheat growers adopt new practices that increase production while lowering cost.

Thorgersen is in charge of all buildings and vehicle repairs on campus, including two greenhouses and a fleet of 13 tractors. The sheer variety of work is more than enough to stay busy year round, he said, but it's his ability to turn obsolete equipment into something new that gets him most excited.

"The designing and putting it all together is something I really enjoy," he said. One of his recent designs started out as federal surplus — a truck previously used by Army for transferring jet fuel. With some alterations and elbow grease, Thorgersen retrofitted the rig to carry three large fertilizer tanks, making it easier to pump and carry bulk chemicals.



Courtesy of ODFW

OR-3, a 3-year-old male wolf from the Imnaha pack, is shown in this image captured from video taken by an ODFW employee on May 10, 2011, in Wallowa County, Ore. Two Oregon lawmakers plan to introduce bills that would ratify the decision by state wildlife officials to delist wolves as an endangered species.

## Proposals seek to ratify wolf delisting

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Press

SALEM — Two Oregon lawmakers plan to introduce bills that would ratify the decision by state wildlife officials to delist wolves as an endangered species.

The proposals, which will be considered during the upcoming legislative session in February, are planned by Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens, and Rep. Greg Barreto, D-Cove, in reaction to a challenge filed by environmental groups.

In November 2015, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to delist the wolves under the state's version of the Endangered Species Act after several criteria for their recovery had been met.

Under a management plan for wolves first created in 2005, the species could be delisted after having established four breeding pairs for three years and no longer facing a substantial risk of extinction in a significant portion of its range, among other criteria.

Wolves were delisted by the federal government in the easternmost portion of the

state, but remain protected in the rest. Oregon wildlife officials have the jurisdiction over those wolves under the state ESA.

However, Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands and the Center for Biological Diversity recently challenged the state's delisting decision in court, arguing the decision unlawfully ignored the best available science about wolf recovery.

The bills, which will be introduced in the House and Senate, will provide the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife — which is overseen by the commission — more ammunition in defending itself in court, Barreto said.

"Re-shoring up what the commission has already decided," he said during a Jan. 1 hearing before the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Oregon has 81 documented wolves, but the actual population is likely in the range of 100-120 animals and a delisting is necessary for the ODFW to eventually manage the species, said Hansell.

Such management could involve hunting to keep populations in check.

## State provides list of pesticides allowed for pot plants

By **ERIC MORTENSON**  
Capital Press

Oregon pot growers wondering about pesticide use have a new guide to consult, courtesy of the state Department of Agriculture.

The guide lists 256 pesticides. It's intended to help growers sort out which pesticides are OK to use. For the purposes of pesticide regulation, at least, Oregon considers cannabis an agricultural crop.

### Online

<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/PesticidesPARC/Guide-listPesticideCannabis.pdf>

For more information on Oregon cannabis production, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/agriculture/Pages/Cannabis.aspx>

There are no pesticide products specifically labeled for use on marijuana, but the state has developed criteria

for products that may be used. Generally, a pesticide can be used on pot plants if it is intended for unspecified food products, is exempt from a tolerance and is considered low risk, according to the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

The department urges pesticide applicators to consult the guide list and apply according to directions on the product label.

Using products not on the list could be a violation of

state pesticide law.

On Jan. 15, the ag department removed Guardian Mite Spray, manufactured by All In Enterprises, from its pesticide list because it contains an active ingredient not on the label. The unlisted active ingredient "does not meet the criteria for inclusion on the ODA guideline," the department said in a bulletin.



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Oregon Aglink, formerly known as the Agri-Business Council of Oregon (ABC), is a private, non-profit volunteer membership organization dedicated to growing Oregon agriculture through education and promotion.

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