

# Capital Press

The West's **Ag** Weekly



# WOLVES

## Washington advisory group softens rhetoric to face hard questions

### Task force recommended for recurring drought

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

SALEM — Despite generous amounts of snow and rain this winter, Eastern Oregon is expected to continue experiencing drought in 2016 based on low soil moisture levels.

In light of this prediction from the National Weather Service, the state's water regulators want to set up a "Task Force on Drought Emergency Response" to find tools for alleviating drought impacts.

The idea recently won approval from Oregon lawmakers on the House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use and Water, which unanimously referred a bill to create the task force to the Joint Ways & Means Committee with a "do pass" recommendation on Feb. 3.

Reservoir levels in Oregon and across much of the West are below average, which means it's too early to "declare victory" over the drought that afflicted farmers in 2015, said Tom Byler, director of the Oregon Water Resources Department.

"We're still not where we want to be, despite the good year we've been having so far," he said, noting that the long-term weather forecast for spring anticipates above normal temperatures and below average precipitation in the Northwest.

The task force proposed in House Bill 4113 would consist of 11-15 members, with the governor appointing up to 11 members and leaders in the House and Senate appointing four members, said Racquel Rancier, senior policy coordinator for OWRD.

Members would examine short-term tools for dealing with drought, such as emergency groundwater usage and temporary transfer of water rights, as well as longer-term solutions, such as water storage, she said. The task force would also improve information sharing among the diverse stakeholders, Rancier said.

The Oregon Farm Bureau is neutral on H.B. 4113 and would like to see resources dedicated to understanding the financial impact of drought across the state, said Mary Anne Nash, public policy counsel for the organization.

April Snell, executive director of the Oregon Water Resources Congress, said the task force is a step in the right direction but she agreed that Oregon State University or the Oregon Department of Agriculture should be funded to better quantify drought effects.

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

Washington state wildlife managers have committed nearly \$1 million in the past year to tame the passions humans have about wolves.

The investment reflects the Department of Fish and Wildlife's position that when it comes to wolves, humans are the biggest challenge.

Most of the money has been spent on a "third-party neutral," Francine Madden, whose conciliatory counseling services are costing the state up to \$8,000 a day.

For nearly a year, Madden has led meetings of WDFW's Wolf Advisory Group, a panel without policy-setting authority that will make wolf policy recommendations to state managers. The group represents ranchers, hunters, conservationists and animal-rights activists. Besides hiring Madden, WDFW in the past year nearly doubled the WAG's membership from nine to 17.

The department's managers are betting that this group can set aside the acrimony of the past and reach a consensus on how wolves should be managed in Washington.

That was always WDFW's hope, but meetings of the old WAG were "destructive," said Donny Martorello, WDFW's point man on wolf recovery. Members dug in their heels and weren't moving toward a consensus, he said.

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Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Francine Madden's conciliatory counseling services cost the state up to \$8,000 a day to work with the Wolf Advisory Group. She was brought in after the state's first advisory group was unable to work together.

**As wolf wars in the West continue and lawsuits fly, the new WAG meetings are swaddled in phrases such as "path to peace," "capacity building" and "conflict transformation."**



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WDFW's policy is that it won't consider lethal removal of wolves until at least four cows or sheep have been killed and the rancher has exhausted other ways to protect his animals.

### Wolf Advisory Group membership

Following are the members of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Wolf Advisory Group and their affiliations:

- **Bob Aegeter:** Sierra Club
- **Shawn Cantrell:** Defenders of Wildlife
- **Tim Coleman:** Kettle Range Conservation Group
- **Don Dashiell:** Stevens County commissioner
- **Tom Davis:** Washington Farm Bureau
- **Dave Duncan:** Washingtonians for Wildlife Conservation
- **Tom Erskine:** Hiker and photographer
- **Jack Field:** Washington State Cattlemen's Association
- **Diane Gallegos:** Wolf Haven International
- **Janey Howe:** Science teacher and part-time range rider
- **Molly Linville:** Independent cattle rancher
- **Nick Martinez:** Washington State Sheep Producers
- **Dan McKinley:** Mule Deer Foundation
- **Dan Paul:** Humane Society of the United States
- **Mark Pidgeon:** Hunters Heritage Council
- **Lisa Stone:** Hunter
- **Paula Swedeen:** Conservation Northwest

## Weatherman: Warmer, wetter spring and summer ahead

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

SPOKANE — Pacific Northwest farmers will see warmer and wetter weather in the months ahead, meteorologist Art Douglas predicts.

Temperatures in February and March will run slightly above normal in the region, Douglas said, which means winter-kill in wheat will not be a problem.

Douglas, a fixture at the Spokane Ag

Expo and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum for decades, offered his annual forecast on Feb. 2. He is a professor emeritus at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb.

Spring rains will primarily occur in the Southwestern U.S., but moisture will also be slightly above normal in Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington and in the Idaho panhandle. The Pacific Northwest will be "very warm" in May, but still have moisture, he said.

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Creighton University's Art Douglas delivers his weather forecast and presentation on global climate trends Feb. 2 during the Spokane Ag Expo and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum.

Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

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