



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Ephrata, Wash., beekeeper Tim Hiatt carries jaws of honey Feb. 18 on the Capitol Campus in Olympia. He planned to present honey to lawmakers who sponsored a bill calling on the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board to test planting pollen- and nectar-rich plants. The bill passed the House 96-1 and now goes to the Senate.

Washington looks at modest bee forage experiment

Beekeepers stung by weed control

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — For the sake of honeybees, Washington may cautiously experiment with introducing pollen-rich plants on small pieces of private land, testing whether noxious weeds can be controlled without killing every blooming plant.

House Bill 2478, similar to legislation that stalled last year, would authorize the State Noxious Weed Control Board to supply landowners with bee-friendly plants or seeds.

Landowners would then see over several years whether forage for pollinators could supplant noxious weeds, reducing herbicide spraying that also eradicates plants that bees feed on.

“That’s been a source of frustration for many beekeepers, that often weed control is out of control and leaves nothing for the bees to forage,” said Ephrata commercial beekeeper Tim Hiatt, legislative chairman of the Washington State Beekeepers Association.

HB 2478 has been passed 96-1 by the House and has received a favorable reception from the Senate Agriculture Committee. The Washington Farm Bureau has indicated its support.

A more ambitious and expensive bee-forage bill last year would have directed the weed control board to work with state and federal land managers to replace noxious weeds with pollen- and nectar-rich plants.

The bill passed the House, but received 31 “no” votes and never came to a vote in the Senate. The bill encountered opposition from legislators concerned about the dangers of inadvertently introducing new invasive plants.

This year’s bill, introduced by Rep. Strom Peterson, D-Edmonds, focuses on working with private landowners on a modest scale.

The weed control board’s executive secretary, Alison Halpern, said that if the Senate passes the bill, she envisions about 100 landowners around the state supplanting noxious weeds with bee forage on one-tenth of an acre plots.

“I think it’s a great bill,” she said. “It allows us to do more outreach to landowners about long-term management, not just weed control.”

The bill also encourages state agencies to look at planting bee forage.

The bill does not dictate any changes in current weed-control efforts by landowners or counties. The state would spend an estimated \$17,000 the first year on seeds, plants and printing up information about the pilot project.

A Washington State Department of Agriculture study group last year concluded that

lack of forage was a prime reason for high bee mortality rates. Among 147 plants designated by the state as noxious weeds, at least 27 of them are good sources of bee nutrition, according to a legislative report.

The pilot project would have little immediate effect. One hundred landowners planting pollen-rich plants on one-tenth acre plots equals 10 acres.

“This project wouldn’t create acres and acres of forage for bees, but it would create, we hope, good guidelines for landowners to go forward if they’re interested in creating forage when they remove noxious weeds,” Hiatt said.

Oregon man who shot a radio-collared wolf pleads guilty

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

An Oregon man who shot an endangered wolf while hunting coyotes last fall pleaded guilty Tuesday in Grant County Justice Court.

As part of a negotiated deal, Brennon D. Witty, 26, of Baker City, pleaded guilty to taking a threatened or endangered species, a Class A violation, Harney County District Attorney Tim Colahan said in a news release.

A companion charge of hunting with a centerfire rifle with no big game tag was dismissed. Witty originally was charged with two Class A misdemeanors; the reduction of one charge to a violation and dismissal of the other was part of the plea negotiation.

Witty was fined \$1,000 and ordered to pay \$1,000 restitution to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The rifle he used, a Savage .223 with a scope, was for-



Courtesy of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

feited to the state. The investigation began Oct. 6, 2015, when Witty voluntarily notified ODFW and Oregon State Police that he’d shot a wolf while hunting coyotes on private property south of Prairie City. Police recovered the carcass of a radio-collared wolf, designated OR-22, on the property.

The shooting happened in Grant County but Colahan, the prosecutor in neighboring Harney County, handled it as a courtesy. The Grant

County district attorney was acquainted with Witty’s family and wanted to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The shooting happened a month before Oregon removed gray wolves from the state endangered species list, but that had no apparent bearing on the case. The ODFW Commission on Nov. 9 removed wolves from the state list, and they remain on the federal endangered species list in the western two-thirds of the state.

The wolf was a male that had worn a GPS tracking collar since October 2013 and dispersed from the Umatilla Pack in February 2015. He was in Malheur County for awhile, then traveled into Grant County.

Wildlife biologists don’t believe he had a mate or pups. Young or sub-dominant wolves often leave their home packs to establish their own territory and find mates.

Women in agriculture Conference

March 19, 2016 * 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Power up your Communications! Power up your Farm!
Whether you are on Facebook or face-to-face, it matters how you communicate with others. Discover your communications style, enjoy keynote farmer Shelly Boshart Davis from Oregon, and network with local ag women at this one-day gathering simultaneously taking place in 31 locations in Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Alaska!

The registration fee is \$25 before March 5, and \$30 after; find your local site and register on the website:
WomenInAg.wsu.edu

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
WSU Extension programs are available to all without discrimination. 9-4/#14

BECOME AN AGRICULTURE TEACHER

WHAT IS AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION?

Agricultural education teaches students about agriculture, food and natural resources. Through these subjects, agricultural educators teach students a wide variety of skills, including science, math, communications, leadership, management and technology.

WHY TEACH AGRICULTURE?

Ag teachers never have the same day twice. One day they might be in a classroom or laboratory, the next visiting students in the field, preparing teams for an FFA Career Development Event, or leading a community service activity with their FFA Chapter.

AG TEACHERS

- **Teach by doing, not just telling**
- **Share their passion for agriculture**
- **Create lessons that are hands-on**
- **Reach students, including those who might not be successful in a traditional classroom**
- **Teach about cutting edge topics, like cloning, satellite mapping, biofuels, alternative energy and more.**
- **Travel in state, nationally, and even internationally.**
- **Work with new and emerging technology from agribusiness companies.**

TEACHER SHORTAGE

Currently there is a national shortage of agricultural educators at the secondary level. It is estimated that there will be hundreds of unfilled positions across the United States this year, simply because not enough students are choosing to be agricultural educators.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT:
WWW.NAAE.ORG/TEACHAG