

# What's Upstream finally makes impression on Wash. lawmakers

## Senator: 'Total waste of money'

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

A campaign funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to sway Washington legislators apparently went unnoticed during the 2016 session, but it's getting unflattering attention now.

The chairmen of the Senate and House agriculture committees Tuesday criticized the What's Upstream advocacy campaign, saying it reinforced negative views of the EPA as an overreaching agency.

"If they truly did agree to this lobbying, someone with the EPA needs to be held accountable, not just a slap on the wrist, but held accountable for violating the law," said House Agriculture Committee Chairman Brian Blake, D-Abideen.

What's Upstream has angered some federal lawmakers,

Washington House Agriculture Committee Chairman Brian Blake says U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials should be held accountable if they broke the law in supporting the What's Upstream advocacy campaign directed at state lawmakers.

who allege the EPA has broken laws related to lobbying and unauthorized spending.

The campaign, however, was ostensibly directed at state lawmakers. The campaign's lead organizer, the Swinomish Indian tribe, set a goal of changing state water-pollution

control laws by this year, according to EPA records.

Blake and Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake, said they learned about the EPA-funded campaign after the Legislature adjourned March 10.

"It was a total waste of time and money if they were trying to get my attention," Warnick said. "The only attention they got from me was a negative impression.

"I was angry about how it was paid for, how it came about and even more angry about where the actual picture of cows came from," said Warnick, referring to a What's Upstream billboard photo of cows in a stream that was taken in Amish country.

Warnick said she's met constituents who see the EPA-funded campaign as more evidence government is hostile toward agriculture.

"To have an agency like EPA come in and do something like this is over-the-top,

in their opinion," she said.

Visitors to the What's Upstream website were urged to "take action" by sending a form letter to state legislators asking for mandatory 100-foot buffers between farm fields and waterways.

The link has been removed from the website. The EPA previously said the link did not violate prohibitions on using federal funds to lobby because the letter did not take a position on specific pending legislation.

The Swinomish tribe, however, had been involved in a proposal presented during the 2016 session to require buffers on some farmland.

Rep. Derek Stanford, D-Bothell, introduced a bill to require property owners participating in a voluntary farmland preservation program to leave buffers along salmon-bearing waterways.

Stanford said Tuesday that he worked for many months on the proposal with the tribe's environmental policy director, Larry Wasserman.

"I don't know if they were working on the What's Upstream campaign at that point. I hadn't heard of that until much more recently. But, yeah, it would tie with what the goals are of protecting the salmon," Stanford said.

The bill was referred to the House Agriculture Committee, and Blake declined to give it a hearing.

Blake said the bill would have undermined voluntary farmland preservation efforts by imposing uniform-sized buffers.

"You may get 95 percent of the benefit with 10 feet of buffer. Adding another 90 feet makes no sense. It's taking land out of production with very little benefit," he said.

Efforts to reach Wasserman were unsuccessful.

By the time the Legislature convened in January, the Swinomish tribe already had spent an estimated \$570,000 on the campaign, according to EPA records.

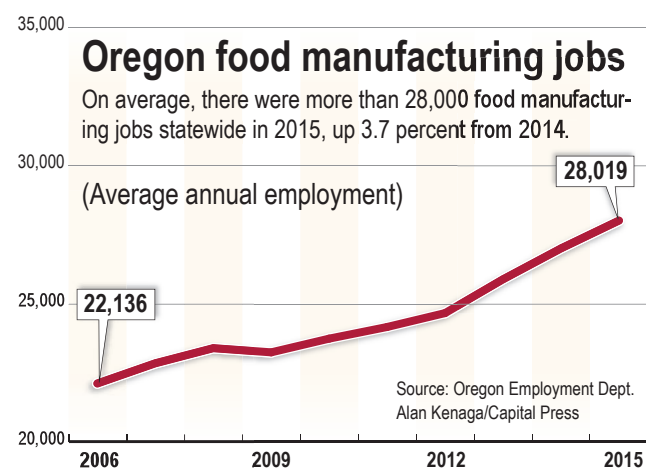
Washington Public Dis-

closure Commission spokeswoman Lori Anderson said groups that organize grassroots lobbying must register if they spend at least \$700 in a month or \$1,400 over three months.

What's Upstream did not register. "We haven't heard about them before now," Anderson said Wednesday.

The Swinomish tribe hired a Seattle public relations firm in 2012 and formed a partnership with several environmental groups. The campaign was begun by 2013, according to EPA records, but apparently had little impact.

Longview Rep. Dean Takko, the top-ranking Democrat on the Senate Agriculture Committee, took his first look at the website Tuesday. "It looks like someone went out of their way to make farmers look like bad guys," he said. "If you want to see water that color (brown), wait until a good rain, especially on this (west) side of the mountains."



## Oregon's food processing companies lead statewide manufacturing revival

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

**Online**  
To see the report, go to <http://bit.ly/24nYPOU>

Oregon's food processing jobs reached an all-time high in 2015 and led a statewide manufacturing rebound that outpaced the rest of the country, according to a new report.

Josh Lehner, an economist with the state Office of Economic Analysis who tracks trends, said other states have regained only one-third of the manufacturing jobs they lost in the recession.

"Then there's Oregon," Lehner wrote in his most recent post, "Oregon Manufacturing in Perspective."

Oregon has regained nearly two-thirds of its lost manufacturing jobs, and is adding jobs at a 4 percent annual rate in recent years, Lehner said.

Food processing has been a persistent bright spot in the state economy. It was the only Oregon manufacturing sector that didn't leak jobs during the recession, and the only one to reach an all-time high during the recovery.

Lehner said Oregon counted 28,019 food manufacturing jobs in 2015, with an average wage of \$39,463. More than a quarter of the jobs, 7,553, were in frozen food processing such as is done at plants operated by NORPAC Foods Inc.

Lehner said Oregon food processing probably does well for a couple reasons. The state's producers and plants are geographically centered between major markets, and the state grows a wide variety of crops.

"The mix we have locally is doing really well," he said.

In his post, Lehner not-

"I'd like to see what the (jobs) graph looks like in three to five years. I don't see agricultural production dwindling, but there will not necessarily be more jobs."

Geoff Horning, executive director of Oregon Aglink

ed some caution. He said the strong U.S. dollar and slower global economy may tamp down food processing and other manufacturing gains. Also, outside high-tech, manufacturing no longer pays wages that are substantially above other sectors, he said.

Geoff Horning, executive director of Oregon Aglink, formerly the Agri-Business Council of Oregon, said the food manufacturing job numbers drive home the important role of agriculture in the state's economy.

But Horning said a couple factors cloud the horizon. The increase in Oregon's minimum wage will make production more costly, and labor is hard to find these days, he said. Automation may become more prevalent.

"I'd like to see what the (jobs) graph looks like in three to five years," he said. "I don't see agricultural production dwindling, but there will not necessarily be more jobs."

## Idaho sheep video gets 262,000 YouTube views

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

WILDER, Idaho — A 23-minute video about Idaho sheep has generated a lot of attention on YouTube and nobody is quite sure why.

The video has been viewed more than 262,000 times since it was posted in June 2013.

It features Wilder sheep rancher Frank Shirts and some of his 28,000 ewes and lambs. Shirts speaks openly about the love he has for the job and the challenges he faces.

Shirts said though he's "tickled to death over" the video's success, he's not surprised by it because a lot of people love sheep.

"It wasn't me," he said. "The people that watched it won't even remember my name. People love seeing those baby lambs."

Most of the 58 comments below the video are positive, and it has received 568 "likes" and 33 "dislikes."

Shirts said he's most happy that the video has shed some light on some of the positive aspects of the sheep industry.

"If it can help our industry, that's the main thing I'm happy to see," he said.

The video was produced by Steve Stuebner for Life on the Range, an Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission educational outreach campaign that informs people about Idaho ranchers.

Stuebner followed Shirts and his flock for an entire year as the sheep were moved from the low country near the Snake River to higher country in the Boise and Payette national forests.

"He just walked us through the whole process of raising lambs and grazing across public and private land to the point they are ready to get shipped to market," Stuebner said.

The 262,000 views is a lot for a simple farming video, said Jake Putnam, broadcast services manager for Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

"It just shows the American people are very curious about where their food comes," he said. "They're also very curious about farmers and ranchers and they like to put names and faces to their food."

The Shirts video is one of 30 in the Life on the Range series and is by far the most popular, with second place registering 47,000 views.



Courtesy of Steve Stuebner

Wilder, Idaho, sheep rancher Frank Shirts speaks to a film crew while shooting footage for a video that has been viewed more than 262,000 times on YouTube.

IRRC Executive Director Gretchen Hyde said she has no idea why the Shirts video is so popular.

She said none of the videos is scripted.


"It's really them talking from the heart, which is the most effective way to reach the public," she said. "I think that comes through really well."

The videos cover a wide variety of range-related topics, from how to get a BLM permit to photo monitoring to how ranchers are taking care of Idaho's rangelands and managing them for multiple uses.

"We're letting people know the positive stories going on on the rangeland; the diversity of ranches and rangeland issues and how people are individually handling them," Hyde said.

To view the Shirts video, search online for, "A year in the life of raising sheep in


Idaho." To view the other videos, go to [www.lifeontherange.org](http://www.lifeontherange.org).



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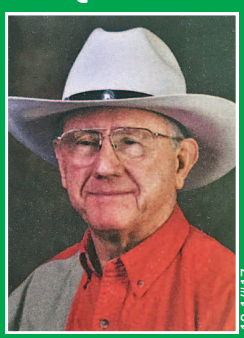
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