

# Oregon

## Ranchers oppose cuts to wolf compensation, predator control

Budget proposals for Oregon Department of Agriculture curtail predator programs

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press



ODFW

Two adult wolves from the Walla Walla Pack were caught on remote trail camera Jan. 16, 2016 in northern Umatilla County, Ore. State legislators are considering reductions in funding for predator control and reimbursing ranchers for livestock losses.

Ranchers who suffer livestock losses from predators stand to lose state support under both budget scenarios currently proposed for the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Funding aimed at predator control and compensation for livestock depredation would be cut under recommendations from Gov. Kate Brown as well as the co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, Sen. Richard Devlin, D-Tualatin, and Rep. Nancy Nathanson, D-Eugene.

The proposed cuts drew objections from the livestock industry during a Feb. 22 hearing on ODA's budget before a panel of Joint Ways and Means Committee members focused on natural resources.

As the wolf population has grown in Oregon, livestock losses have been a continuing source of frustration for ranchers, said Mike Durgan of the Baker County Wolf Compensation Advisory Committee.

Even when wolves don't kill cattle, they cause health problems that are considered indirect losses and aren't

compensated with state dollars, Durgan said.

Until wildlife officials find a better way to manage the predators, the livestock industry should receive state assistance, he said. "I want to make it clear I'm not advocating killing wolves today."

Oregon counties have steadfastly contributed money to their partnership with ODA and USDA's Wildlife Services division to pay for predator control, even as they've fallen short of funds for public safety and other vital services, said Craig Pope, a Polk County commissioner.

"We will have no one else to call if we let this partnership fail," Pope said. "Counties cannot make up the difference of this funding hole."

The Oregon Hunters Association and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation testified in favor of restoring

the state's full contribution to the predator control program, which they say is necessary to maintain a balance between predators and deer and elk.

Under the governor's recommended 2017-2019 budget, the ODA would eliminate \$460,000 in state funding for the USDA's Wildlife Services division, which kills problematic predators.

An ODA program that compensates ranchers for wolf depredation would be funded at \$211,000 under the governor's proposal, compared to \$233,000 in the 2015-2017 biennium.

The co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, meanwhile, have proposed a "budget framework" for the upcoming biennium that would decrease funding for the wolf compensation program "and/or reduce funding for predator control."

## Natural resource groups skeptical of state science panel proposal

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press



Oregon Capitol.

SALEM — A bill before Oregon lawmakers has raised a philosophical question: Is it possible to achieve an unbiased scientific opinion?

Or more precisely, is a politically appointed scientific panel capable of reaching such an impartial truth?

Legislators recently pondered this problem while deliberating on Senate Bill 198, which would create an Independent Science Review Board to ponder some of the thornier controversies facing state regulators.

Oregon's farmers and ranchers are no strangers to science-related disputes over wolves, pesticides and genetically engineered crops, among others.

Natural resource groups, while commending SB 198's noble aim, are nonetheless skeptical of how the review process would play out in reality.

State agencies that make "high impact" decisions affecting natural resource industries are already overseen by boards and commissions, said Mike Freese, vice president of Associated Oregon Industries, who testified at a Feb. 22 hearing before the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

"Simply having the same debate in front of a new board doesn't make a lot of sense to me," said Freese, who testified on behalf of AOI and other groups, including the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Forest Industries Council and

Oregon Dairy Farmers Association.

Under SB 198, the Independent Scientific Review Board would be appointed by the governor, just like the commissions overseeing state agencies. The governor would also hire an administrator for an Oregon State University "secretariat" to assist the board with its work.

The current version of the legislation doesn't adequately ensure the Independent Science Review Board would be free of political influence, Freese said.

As a result, the new panel would become another venue for advocacy groups to seek a stamp of approval for their policy positions in "age-old debates," he said.

Natural resource industries are concerned about perceived biases not only in the panel's conclusions, but also in the type of questions that it decides to pursue, Freese said.

Sen. Alan Olsen, R-Canby, said he hopes the Independent Science Review Board would provide clear, transparent information to help lawmakers make decisions involving multiple agencies or scientific disciplines.

Lawmakers would ideally present scientific questions for the panel a year before the

pertinent legislation is introduced, he said.

It's currently difficult for legislators to decide whose experts to listen to, said Sen. Herman Baertschiger, R-Grants Pass. "We've got peer reviewed science on both sides."

Sen. Arnie Roblan, D-Coos Bay, said he's "seen belief trump science repeatedly" in the legislature and noted that advocates often bring in their own scientists to discount opposing views.

"It puts the panel right in the middle of the most contentious issues we have in the state," Roblan said.

The current language of SB 198 has raised some concerns among task force members who recommended the Independent Science Review Board's creation.

While the task force generally supports the bill, the administrator overseeing the panel's "secretariat" would be more insulated from political influence if appointed directly by panel members, rather than the governor, said Dan Edge, associate dean of OSU's College of Agricultural Science.

The task force is also troubled by the possibility that SB 198 would allow the Independent Science Review Board to be funded with grants and donations, said Edge.

It'd be preferable for the panel's money to come from the state general fund, to avoid the perception that large donors can steer the review process, he said.

"We're very concerned we might end up in a 'pay to play' situation," Edge said.

## Oregon's rival universities form research pact on tall wooden buildings

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

Cross Oregon State Beavers and University of Oregon Ducks, pull in a Scotsman from Canada and you get, well, tall buildings made out of wood.

The forestry and engineering colleges at OSU are teaming with UO's School of Architecture and Allied Arts to form the nation's first research program focused on structural wood products and their use in modest high-rise buildings.

Oregon State announced the collaboration this week and said its Center for Advanced Wood Products Manufacturing and Design has been renamed the TallWood Design Institute. It's intended to become a national research, education, teaching and outreach hub.

Iain Macdonald, a native of Scotland who has headed a similar project at the University of British Columbia the past 10 years, was hired as the institute's acting director.

Over time, the initiative could have significant economic impact in rural Oregon, much of which was hard hit by the near shutdown of the state's timber industry over the past 30 years. Finding new uses for wood in construction could lead to more mill investment and employment, industry observers believe.

Nationally, tall wood building construction has attracted considerable attention. Experts say wood is a more environmentally sustainable material than steel and concrete, in part because it sequesters carbon.

Macdonald, the new director, said the institute has a two-prong objective. It could revitalize the timber industry by creating new opportunities to use "mass timbers," panels and beams made through advanced engineering techniques. That could create manufacturing jobs in Oregon, he said.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by using wood in construction is another

benefit, he said.

Combining OSU's engineering and forestry colleges with the UO's experience in sustainable architecture is a great move, Macdonald said.

"You have people with expertise all along the value chain," he said. "In my experience, that's how problems get solved."

Oregon has something of a jump start on wood buildings. In September 2015, a 12-story project in Portland's upscale Pearl District was awarded a \$3 million prize in a USDA design competition intended to encourage the use of timber products in tall construction.

That same month, a Southern Oregon mill, D.R. Johnson, became the first American company certified by the American Plywood Association and American National Standards Institute to make cross-laminated timber panels, or CLT. The certification means the panels can be used in building construction.

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