

Oregon

REAL Oregon aims to develop agricultural leaders

By ALIYA HALL
Capital Press

REAL Oregon, a new effort to cultivate leaders in the state's natural resource industries, will convene its first class this fall.

"I think this is something that the natural resource-related industries have recognized as something we need. We want to make sure that it's diverse, and that all the natural resources are reflected as much as possible," Greg Addington, executive director of REAL Oregon, said. "We also want it to be sustainable and to produce a network of leaders throughout the state."

REAL Oregon — an acronym for resource education and agriculture leadership — is targeting participants from all sectors of the agricultural, timber and fishing industries, including farming, ranching and processing.

"I feel really good with the industry's commitment, from agriculture to fishing to forestry, it has been tremendous. As long as we do this right,



Courtesy REAL Oregon
Greg Addington is the executive director of REAL Oregon, a new effort to build a corps of leaders in the state's natural resources industries, including agriculture and timber.

it'll be a strong program," Addington said.

Modeled after Leadership Idaho Agriculture, the REAL Oregon program begins in November and concludes in

March of the following year. The program will consist of five 2 1/2-day sessions in Burns, Astoria, Medford, Salem and Boardman.

"Despite having great

Online

<http://realoregon.net/>

leaders throughout Oregon agriculture, I'd argue we're not developing these leaders. Their leadership training is coming from other resources," said Geoff Horning, executive director of Oregon Aglink. "The mission is simple but complex: Build natural resource leaders who make a difference for Oregon."

REAL Oregon follows in the footsteps of Leadership Oregon Ag, which was started 15 years ago by Oregon resource groups. That program had only one class and wasn't financially sustainable, according to Addington.

"That said, I can tell you personally that I thought the class itself was very successful. But I think the fact that it wasn't sustained left a bad taste in some people's mouths and it has taken this long to try again," he said. "The difference this time is that we are modeling it after a more

modest program in Idaho. It's more manageable for now — and more affordable."

The online application includes a one-page essay and two letters of recommendation. It is also recommended that applicants speak with employers and spouses because participants are expected to attend all five sessions to graduate, and it is a large time commitment.

The classes will focus on the subjects of board governance, communication skills, conflict resolution, government interaction, public policy, media relations, natural resource industries' co-existence, professional presentation, public speaking, strength assessment and urban-rural relationship building.

"The urban-rural divide in Oregon is real. The chasm feels like it's getting exponentially larger. There is a lot of talk about bridging that gap, but it too often feels like a bridge to nowhere," Horning said. "Oregon's natural resource community needs a legion of polished leaders who

can both listen and represent our interests. As an industry it's our responsibility to develop that army. REAL Oregon is that effort by a unified natural resources community to build those leaders moving forward."

REAL Oregon will accept 30 participants in its first class. The minimum age requirement is 26 years old.

"It's not that there aren't great folks under that age, but we want someone on a career path who knows what they want to do, and we don't want to just get young people. I think it's important to have a diversity of ages and leadership experience in the class," Addington said.

The application deadline for the first class is July 28 and the cost of the program is \$2,500 a person. While there are no scholarships available at this time, prospective students are still encouraged to apply and indicate in the application if financial help is needed. For more information, Addington can be reached at (541) 892-1409.

Some Oregon farm bills quietly die, others quietly gain approval

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Analysis

SALEM — Many attention-grabbing farm-related bills considered during Oregon's 2017 legislative session died quietly despite much initial fanfare.

Meanwhile, several more-targeted and less-contentious proposals were approved without nearly as much commotion, though they're likely to have on-the-ground consequences for growers.

Numerous bills drew big crowds to committee meetings where lawmakers heard hours of impassioned testimony.

Limits were proposed for neonicotinoid pesticides, dairy emissions, livestock antibiotics and solar panels on farmland.

New lawsuits over pesticides would have been possible under legislation that removed "right to farm" protections for chemical applications and eliminated the requirement to notify farm regulators before filing complaints.

Every water right in Oregon would have been subject to a new \$100 fee under one bill, while irrigators would have to install measuring devices under companion legislation.

Critics of genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, attempted to overturn the state government's pre-emption of local restrictions against such crops. They also supported a bill that would have exposed GMO patent holders to new financial liabilities.

All of those proposals failed, not during dramatic floor votes, but because they were killed off by legislative deadlines.

Lawmakers also sorted through a multitude of attempts to tweak Oregon's land use laws to relax restrictions on farmland.

A few significant proposals

proved successful.

With the passage of Senate Bill 677, companies producing hard cider will enjoy the same land use rules as those producing wine, meaning they can process and sell the beverage on farmland while conducting other agritourism activities.

Several bills would have made it easier to build "accessory dwelling units" to increase housing availability in rural areas.

Under House Bill 3012 — which passed the House and Senate unanimously — historic homes can be converted into such ADUs when a new house is built in a rural residential zone. Previously, the older building had to be demolished to make way for a new home.

It will also be easier to apply biosolids — often called sewage sludge — to farmland.

Biosolids are already regularly used as fertilizer, but they're often generated by stationary sewage treatment plants.

House Bill 2179 clarifies that human waste from septic tanks can be treated on-site within farm zones in mobile units that travel from property to property.

Another successful bill ensures growers who lose farm structures to natural catastrophes will be able to rebuild without interference from the Department of State Lands.

Last year, the agency tried to block a hay exporter from rebuilding two burned-down barns because they were suspected of being located in a wetland, despite the property's absence from any wetland maps.

House Bill 2785 clarifies that landowners who want to rebuild farm dwellings and other agricultural structures are exempt from Oregon's fill-removal laws, as long as they receive county approval and the original destroyed buildings existed before 2017.

Before approving new sub-

divisions, local governments will have to notify irrigation districts early in the process under Senate Bill 865.

Irrigation districts worried that new housing projects will disrupt canals and other infrastructure, prompting them to propose the legislation.

After some initial resistance from cities, a compromise was struck and SB 865 passed unanimously in the Senate and 56-1 in the House.

On the tax front, farmers won two notable victories.

Beneficial tax provisions — exempting agricultural machinery from property taxes and reducing property tax rates for farmland — were set to expire in seven years under House Bill 2859, whereas they're currently permanent.

The proposal drew such vehement opposition from growers that the House Revenue Committee decided to scrap those provisions during the bill's first hearing.

Another tax proposal, House Bill 2060, nearly went the distance.

The bill, which would have excluded small companies with fewer than 10 year-round employees from tax breaks, narrowly passed the House but died in the Senate without a hearing.

Agricultural groups convinced lawmakers to spend money on a couple proposals that are popular among farmers: grants for schools to buy local foods and a fund to pay for farmland-preservation easements.

However, several farm-related spending proposals didn't gain traction, such as those directing cash to the battles against sudden oak death and invasive weeds.

Bills dedicated to restoring state funding for FFA agricultural education, meanwhile, were approved by education committees in the House and Senate but never received a hearing in the critical Joint Committee on Ways and Means, which allocates funding.

Lawmakers approve Oregon farmland easement fund

Farm-to-school funding also passes late in session

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Oregon lawmakers have created a state fund dedicated to buying farmland-preservation easements, albeit without the \$4.25 million initially sought by supporters.

Proponents of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund are nonetheless cheering the news, since new spending bills were met with skepticism from legislators due to a tight budget outlook.

"It's pretty incredible to create a program like this in a not-easy legislative session," said Nellie McAdams, farm preservation program director with Rogue Farm Corps, a group dedicated to training future farmers.

Because the state's land use system greatly restricts building on farmland, working lands easements aren't as common in Oregon as in many other states.

Farmers can sell easements on their land that extinguish most development rights while still preserving their ability to grow crops and livestock on the property.

However, existing funding sources for easements are often geared toward conserving wildlife habitat and riparian areas and not production agriculture.

The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund would help solve that problem with money dedicated to working lands easements, but the \$4.25 million originally planned for the program was viewed by legislators as an unrealistic request.

Instead, supporters focused on getting the program's basic mechanisms and governance established.

"We can focus in the future on funding," said Mary Anne Nash, public policy counsel for the Oregon Farm Bureau. "There's a tremendous public benefit so we'll be looking for public funds in the future."

Under House Bill 3249, which passed with strong majorities in the House and Senate in the waning days of the legislative session, nearly \$200,000 will be directed to writing rules for the program and forming a commission to oversee it.

"The next step will be finding out who will be shaping this program," said McAdams.

It's likely that proponents of the fund will go back to lawmakers in 2019 to seek money for the fund, so the next two years will be devoted to setting priorities for the program, she said.

"That process should probably be long and include a lot of public involvement," McAdams said.

Oregon rancher sentenced for illegally killing elk

By STEVE TOOL
EO Media Group

ENTERPRISE, Ore. — A long-time Wallowa rancher accused of killing 12 of 25 dead elk found on his and an adjoining property has been given a hefty fine and supervised probation.

Larry Michael Harshfield, 69, pleaded guilty to six counts of Taking, Angling, Hunting, or Trapping in Violation of Wildlife Law or Rule.

His case was heard June 28 in Wallowa County Circuit Court. Judge Thomas Powers presided.

The controversial case

divided the region along the lines of those who favored ranchers' property rights and those who argued for the right of the animals to freely roam.

The incidents occurred between Dec. 1, 2016, and Feb. 11 of this year when Oregon State Police game wardens appeared at the Harshfield ranch after receiving an anonymous tip about the killings.


Harshfield was charged April 14. Law enforcement officials initially arrested him, but he was released on his own recognizance later in the day.

The Harshfields claim they did everything they were told

to do, but the elk were persistent in a winter where food was scarce.

At the 45-minute court hearing, Harshfield pleaded guilty to counts 13-18 of the 24 charges, which included 12 charges each of taking wildlife unlawfully and wasting wildlife meat.

District Attorney Mona Williams noted the winter had been unusually severe and that elk had followed a draw in the terrain that led to Harshfield's barn. She said that Harshfield had initially tried hazing the elk with shotgun blasts and also installed plastic netting to stop the raid on his hay. Neither were successful



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