

BIG EQUIPMENT, BIG OPPORTUNITY



Tim Hearden/Capital Press
Rob Piatt of Marysville, Calif., works on an engine during a basic engines theory lab course at San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, Calif. The class is part of the Think Big program, which the college offers in conjunction with Caterpillar dealers and includes apprenticeships at the businesses.

Trade schools offer an attractive alternative to expensive college educations for students interested in agriculture

Student Diane Morgan operates an excavator simulator in the heavy equipment program at Shasta College in Redding, Calif. Career-technical training programs are gaining in popularity as a way for some students to enter forestry and other agriculture-related fields.

Tim Hearden/Capital Press



By TIM HEARDEN
Capital Press

STOCKTON, Calif. — Rob Piatt plans to eventually take over his family's ranch, but the recent high school graduate from Marysville, Calif., isn't preparing by studying agriculture at a four-year university.

Instead, he's a first-year trainee in a program called ThinkBIG, an apprenticeship in servicing heavy-duty agricultural equipment that combines classes at Stockton's San Joaquin Delta College with work in the service department at a Caterpillar dealership.

Piatt found he had a "knack for turning wrenches" while working with his dad to restore old tractors.

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Conservation groups file lawsuit challenging WDFW wolf kill order

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Two conservation groups are accusing the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife of violating state law by improperly authorizing the killing of wolves in the Sher-

man pack and ignoring new research that doesn't support killing problem wolves.

According to a lawsuit filed by the Center for Biological Diversity and Cascadia Wildlands, the department has ignored restrictions on killing wolves under the 2011 Wolf Conservation and Management Plan for more than five years.

The lawsuit named the department, Director Jim Unsworth and coordinator Lisa Wood, who is responsible for the department's following the State Environmental Policy Act, or SEPA, in the lawsuit.

"Documents containing the complaint were delivered to the director's office just before closing time on Monday," department public affairs manager Bruce Botka

said. "We haven't had an opportunity to review them with our attorneys and don't have an immediate response."

The lawsuit seeks to prevent the department from authorizing any future kill orders without complying with SEPA or the state Administrative Procedure Act.

The lawsuit claims that "WDFW has authorized the extermination of three endangered wolfpacks at the demand of a single livestock owner," without trying non-lethal methods of deterrence conflict, without evidence that depredations would have been likely to continue without non-lethal practices and with "evidence of intentional feeding or unnatural attraction of wolves by the livestock owner."

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Oregon Court of Appeals affirms ruling overturning GMO ban

County ordinance is pre-empted by state law

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

The Oregon Court of Appeals has affirmed that a prohibition against genetically engineered crops in Josephine County is pre-empted by state law.

Voters in Josephine County approved the ban in 2014, nearly a year after state lawmakers passed a bill barring local governments from regulating genetically modified organisms, or GMOs.

Farmers Robert and Shelley Ann White, who wanted to plant biotech sugar beets,



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press File

The Josephine County, Ore., courthouse. The Oregon Court of Appeals has affirmed the opinion of Josephine County Circuit Judge Pat Wolke that a county ordinance banning biotech crops is unlawful.

convinced Josephine County Circuit Judge Pat Wolke that the local GMO ban was unlawful in 2016.

Oregonians for Safe Farms and Families, a nonprofit, and Siskiyou Seeds,

an organic farm, intervened in that case as defendants, allowing them to challenge Wolke's decision before the Oregon Court of Appeals.

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