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# Opinion

## Editorial Board

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## OUR VIEW

# Washington pesticide bill approach softens

We are happy that the Washington Senate Labor and Commerce Committee has taken a softer approach on a bill designed to alert the public about pesticide applications.

As originally introduced, Senate Bill 6529 would have been unworkable for farmers. The bill would have required growers to inform the state Health Department four business days before each pesticide application. Health officials would have then been required to give residents and schools within a quarter-mile a two-hour notice.

Depending on when a pest

problem was discovered, the requirement that the public be given four business days notice could have extended to a week the actual time before an application could begin.

Farmers reacting to an immediate pest problem don't have that kind of time to wait. Even routine applications can't be timed several days in advance because of changing weather conditions.

The bill also proposed requiring farmers and pesticide applicators to submit detailed spraying records to the Health Department each month.

Farmers were leery that

providing that kind of information could open them up to lawsuits from environmental organizations.

In its final form, the bill calls for the formation of a task force that will recommend a notification protocol that will be considered by the Legislature next year. It will also take up the issue of making pesticide application records available to the public.

The task force would include legislators and representatives from Labor and Industries, the Department of Natural Resources, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs and the state schools office.

The agriculture director and health secretary would appoint 10 other members. They would draw from farmers, pesticide applicators, labor groups, environmental organizations, farmworker and children's advocates and the Washington State PTA.

All of this is speculative. The bill still must pass the full Senate and then the House.

If that happens, the work of the task force will be watched closely by farm organizations.

It's hard to say what the task force will come up with. But at least in the short run, the original requirement is off the table.



Capital Press File

The Washington Senate is considering a bill that would require farmers to notify neighbors before they apply pesticides. The bill has been modified to include a task force that will recommend how best to do that.

## OUR VIEW

# Detroit Lake project a 'dam' waste

A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposal to build a \$100 million to \$200 million, 300-foot-tall tower at Detroit Dam east of Salem leaves us, well, amazed.

The tower would be used to adjust the temperature of the water leaving the dam and heading downstream in the North Santiam River. The purpose of the project is to increase the returns of the native chinook salmon and steelhead runs, which are protected under the federal Endangered Species Act.

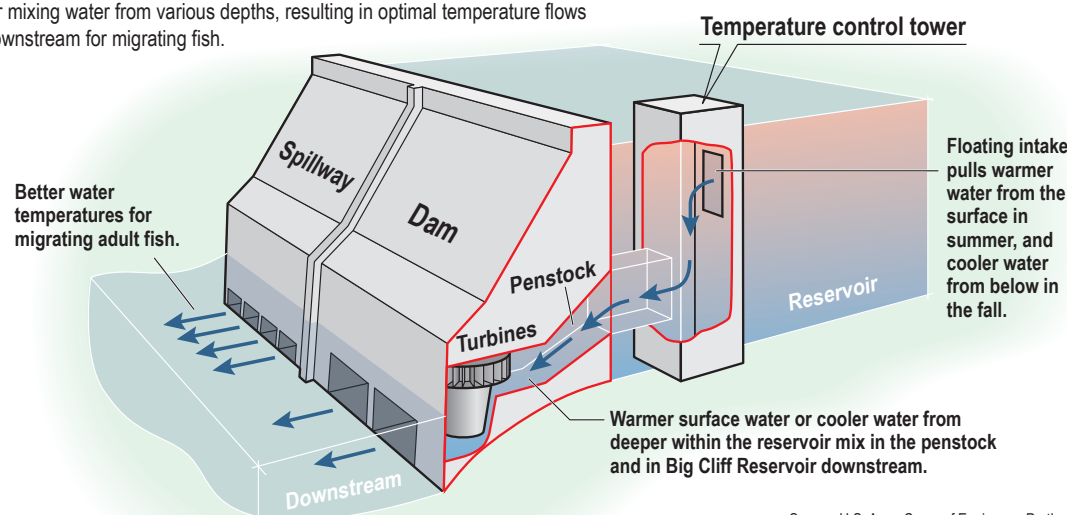
The problem — and there are many — is Detroit Lake will have to be drained for up to two years while the tower, called a selective withdrawal structure, is built. That not only means the lake would be useless as a recreation area but it means the water supply downstream would be limited.

Of particular concern to us are the 800 farmers downstream in the Santiam Water Control District. They farm 17,000 acres — 6 percent of the farmland in Marion County, Oregon's most productive agricultural county.

If the river flow below Detroit

## Selective Withdrawal Structure explained

The construction of a temperature control tower next to Detroit Dam would allow for mixing water from various depths, resulting in optimal temperature flows downstream for migrating fish.



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District  
Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

Dam is reduced or becomes unreliable, those farmers' livelihoods would be put at risk. They would have to find alternative water sources, switch to dryland or low-water crops, or who-knows-what.

Another problem is the reduction in the major source of drinking water for 175,000 Oregonians who live in Salem, the state capital, and Stayton, a small town upriver.

Still another problem is the cost. The federal government spending upwards of \$200 million on such a project is stunning. During an era of massive federal overspending, such a project indicates to us that the government's priorities are scrambled beyond all recognition.

In Fiscal Year 2017, Congress spent \$4 trillion. That's \$666 billion more than it collected in taxes. Unbridled federal spending

sprees are nothing new. Since 2007, Congress has added nearly \$8.6 trillion to the federal deficit. That's an average of \$778 billion a year more than the government collected. The overall federal debt is now \$21 trillion, more than the entire 2017 U.S. gross domestic product of \$19.5 trillion.

The Corps of Engineers doesn't control the federal budget. The water tower at Detroit Lake was ordered in a 2008 biological

opinion when scientists found the salmon and steelhead returns were lower than expected. The Corps is just doing its job.

But it should also be mentioned that there is no shortage of fish in the North Santiam River. According to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, which counts fish at the Upper and Lower Bennett Dams near Stayton, last year there were 5,270 chinook salmon — 987 of them are native run and the rest were from a hatchery. Similarly, there were 775 steelhead — 185 of them native run. And don't forget about 312 coho salmon.

The problem isn't the people in charge of the Corps. It's Congress. It can't set priorities, and it can't balance the federal budget. It did write the Endangered Species Act, which we have said many times before wastes hundreds of millions of dollars focusing on individual populations of fish, not species.

Considering these many problems, if the Corps is looking for enthusiasm for this project, it's going to have to go somewhere else.

## Readers' views

### Organization supports family farms

A travesty is happening in this country to the family farmer. Family farmers are being paid prices for the food they produce that are the same as 30 to 40 years ago, with cost of inputs increasing weekly, and all of this without a cost-of-living raise.

If you like getting food from other countries, where their inspection standards are subpar, then stop reading this letter right now. There is so much being imported that we could produce here, if it wasn't for the multinational corporations that want to get rid of the family farm.

We are tired of some of those in "officialdom" telling us to get "more efficient." Farm Women United (FWU) was formed to fight for the family farms that normally do not have a voice at the table. You may say that there are other organizations out there that are fighting, and you are right, there are a few, but there are more that want to get rid of the small to mid-size family farms than keep them.

FWU is unique because it is made up of women who present the farm woman's point of view about the farm and food crisis that threatens our nation's rural communities and, therefore, our food supply. We stand beside our family, our spouse, or significant other, doing the farm work, only to see how the low

prices are making them depressed, some to the point that they take their own lives.

This needs to stop! Spread the word about Farm Women United. We can use all the members that we can get to help us fight this fight. It is not going to be easy. The more voices we have making the chatter, the more seriously they will take us.

If you would like to help, check out our website, www.farmwomenunited.org. We are currently running a "Green Ribbon Campaign" to support the family farms. If you would like a ribbon, let us know and we will send you one.

Stand with us in getting fairer prices for our family farms. Our co-ops aren't doing it. Our milk processors aren't doing it. Our food handlers aren't doing it. We are no longer going to stand by waiting for something to be done or for a federal farm bill to be drafted without any input from us. Most Americans do not realize how much food we import or from what countries we are importing. Support your local farmers by visiting and buying from local farms or farm markets. They are in most of the larger cities around the country and in smaller towns, too.

The time is now for us to take control of our food again. Visit our website and check it out. Feel free to contact FWU through our website under "Contact Us." If you are not a farm woman but would like to support FWU, you can wear a green ribbon to support fami-

### Letters policy

**Write to us:** Capital Press welcomes letters to the editor on issues of interest to farmers, ranchers and the agribusiness community.

**Letters policy:** Please limit letters to 300 words and include your home address and a daytime telephone number with your submission. Longer pieces, 500-750 words, may be considered as guest commentary pieces for use on the opinion pages. Guest commentary submissions should also include a photograph of the author.

Send letters via email to opinions@capitalpress.com. Emailed letters are preferred and require less time to process, which could result in quicker publication. Letters also may be sent to P.O. Box 2048, Salem, OR 97308; or by fax to 503-370-4383.

ly farms. We lose our family farms, we lose our nation's domestic food supply.

Tina Carlin  
FWU Director  
of Communications  
Meshoppen, Pa.

### Carbonize our farmland

Hear, hear, the heady heedings of guest commentator Mark Turner.

As I was reading it, it was as though he was writing the words right out of my mouth. I've been blessed to be able to investigate the forests of the Northwest, before fire, after fire and after decades from past fires, and I think the same as Mark, that thinning and removing "some" windfalls, and "harvesting" some of the carbon for the sake of carbon sequestration, in our ag soils, is worthy of further note.

We need to manage the carbon of the forests somewhat similarly to the fruit of an orchard. Management is not a mean and nasty notion, it's stewarding our resources

in such a way as to have our grandchildren alive, breathing clean air, drinking water that's without toxins, and eating food that's been made by very few dedicated souls.

Personally, I'm a lifelong flatland farmer in the Skagit, where the forest meets the gentle bay bottom, sequestered from the Salish Sea more than a hundred years ago. Silty muck and clay with thin strips of sand scattered in layers, makes for high yield potential. Without carbon, the soil seizes up. Nutrients get locked in clods of clay, so dried and hard, like cement in the field they lay. Please, dear Lord, won't you please help us here, with a little rain?

Well looky here, you struggling farmer friend, get some carbon in them soils, and they'll come right around, pretty soon you'll feel a smile, instead of a frown and a worried furrowed brow.

When prices are depressed, maybe we should give some ground a rest, grow covers and carry carbon from the forests to the farm, composting it, so no pests infest

our fields. You'll be surprised by how much it helps the healthy yield. Planting even \$5 wheat is a real threat to your long-term security, especially where soils are sloped and prone to erosion.

I think Burlington Northern could conveniently haul carbon in their empty backhaul from hauling coal. We can't just leave all that carbon to go up in flames, especially when a million acres could use it, just a hundred miles away! Carbon helps soften clay, carbon helps microbes milk minerals from particles of sand, carbon sequesters carbon, keeping it in the land, carbon in your soils is like future cash in your hand.

Letting it go up in smoke is no joke, it could smoke the red wine in the vats, it could cancer your lungs, it could water your eyes, and burn a bear's paws. Just cuz a few folks say lightning strikes are natural, then the next thing that's said, is that the size and intensity of storms are not natural, but man enhanced. If we put a hundred thousand firefighters to the task, there'd still be more than enough fire for the forests burn cycle.

The carbon that has burned in our western forests in the past several years would have been worth at least \$300 million to our Columbia Basin soils. Much of the carbon is easily crushable, the least costly method to make microbe food, which after all, is the key that starts the engine of the soil. Take some land that has 1.5 percent organic

matter, add compost and carbon to 3.5 percent and you'll see what you've seldom seen before. Feed the biological processes that provide the nutrients to the roots and rhizosphere. We should all go to lobby the DNR, DOE, and governor's office, to carbonize our soils before any more big fires burn up our grandkids' futures.

Glen S. Johnson  
Mt. Vernon, Wash.

### Wolf chases bike rider near Mount Hood

Much has been written lately about the wolves here in the Northwest. I would like to relate my friends' experience with a wolf in the recent past.

While driving on Highway 26 east of Mount Hood they came upon a biker and along side of the rider was a wolf trying to attack him. The rider was kicking at the wolf to ward it off.

When my friends pulled up, the wolf backed off. My friends offered to take him and his bike in their rig, but being the wolf backed off, he said he would try to keep going.

My friends backed off then, but as soon as they were a short distance away the wolf took off after the biker again.

Our friends pulled up again. This time he didn't hesitate, but took them up on their offer and was thankful to be rescued from a dangerous situation.

Roy H. Matson  
Brush Prairie, Wash.