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Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Wolf transplant bill signals frustration among ranchers

The Washington House of Representatives last week voted in favor of a bill that would require the Department of Fish and Wildlife to study moving wolves from Eastern Washington to Western Washington.

The bill passed 85-13, opposed not surprisingly by three Democrats and 10 Republicans representing districts that would be the likely recipients of translocated wolves if it comes to that. Also not surprisingly, the bill was supported by eastside legislators who already have wolves and urban representatives who have no worry that wolves will one day be roaming the wildlands of Seattle.



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A bill has been introduced in the Washington Legislature that would require the state Department of Fish and Wildlife to study transplanting wolves from the eastside of the state to the westside.

House Bill 2771 was the brainchild of Okanogan County Republican Joel Kretz. His

district has wolves aplenty.

He would have preferred a bill that would allow wildlife managers greater leeway to control wolf populations. That's gone nowhere.

"I'm not excited about putting wolves onto anyone, anywhere," he told the Capital Press. "But on the flip side, I've tried to deal with this in a way that didn't affect anybody else's district, and it hasn't worked."

The bill's prospects in the Senate are unclear. And even if it were to pass and be signed by the governor, it's not that easy to move wolves from one spot to another.

First, state wildlife managers

are inclined to let wolves disperse naturally.

Second, wolves are protected in the West by the federal Endangered Species Act, while wolves in the East are managed solely by the state. Any plan to move wolves from the eastside to the westside would require the approval of the federal government and involve lengthy studies.

Still, it's an interesting gambit.

Cattle Producers of Washington President Scott Nielsen, a Stevens County rancher, wants to enlist westside farmers into the battle eastside ranchers have been fighting for a

number of years.

"While I don't wish wolves on anyone, it will bring the rest of agriculture and rural folks into the fight," Nielsen told Capital Press. "It's a social battle, and the best way to win a social battle is to have as many people on the same page as us."

Introducing an apex predator in their midst that they are powerless to control will certainly motivate westside livestock producers and rural residents to join the fight.

Facilitating an enemy's attack on a neighbor in order to recruit that neighbor as your ally is a novel strategy. Such is the frustration of eastside ranchers.

OUR VIEW



STARTING SMALL: A salute to all who farm

Most U.S. farms are small by one definition or another. A 100-acre apple orchard in central Washington can be described as small, and so can a 500-acre corn-and-soybean farm in southern Minnesota.

So can 10 acres of pasture for sheep in western Oregon or 2 acres of vegetables in southwestern Idaho.

Small, as it turns out, is in the eye of the beholder.

The old adage goes that your farm is "small" if it's smaller than the one down the road.

But something else beyond the number of acres needs to be considered. These days, "small farm" often brings with it a connotation, a state of mind. It's one where farmers go to great lengths to learn to "do it right" — to care for their land and animals in a way that allows the farm to continue for generations to come.

A great many small farms are also relatively new. Nearly every farm started small. A century-old wheat farm that now includes thousands of acres in eastern Washington most likely started much smaller. Over

time, economics allowed the family to buy more land. Eventually, the farm reached a "right size" that allowed it to achieve economies of scale.

We recently ran a story about several small-scale farmers. Among them were Nate and Janis Newsom, who three years ago moved from southern California to 17 acres outside Stayton, Ore., in the Willamette Valley. They have been successfully growing a variety of crops at their Bear Branch Farms, selling produce through their community supported agriculture program.

Those who are new to farming often find themselves on a steep learning curve. Someone who wants to "farm" will also need to wear many other hats. Soil science, animal husbandry, botany, horticulture, genetics, hydrology, meteorology, economics, marketing, accounting, financial planning, small engine repair, diesel mechanics, plumbing, welding — even a knowledge of water law and local, state and federal regulations quickly become part of the picture.

But there's help. With thousands of farmers nationwide approaching

retirement, the focus at large land-grant universities has broadened to include small farmers and how to help them. Classes, programs, workshops and seminars such as the Oregon Small Farm Conference at Oregon State University on Feb. 24 fling open the doors to small farmers of all types to inform and encourage them and help them form networks and relationships with mentors.

This is an exciting time to be a farmer or rancher. Researchers are developing new and more efficient ways of farming and ranching. Conventional farming continues to be a great way to earn a living and make a lifestyle, and organic farming continues to gain in popularity. Farmers' markets, community supported agriculture and food hubs all help small-scale farmers make important connections with customers. Farmers and ranchers are constantly finding new niches to explore and develop.

The future has never been brighter for those who choose to cultivate the land, and make a life from it.

We salute all who take up the challenge.

George Plaven/Capital Press

PHOTO: Nate and Janis Newsom arrived in Oregon from southern California three years ago to start Bear Branch Farms outside Stayton. They are among the many thousands of small-scale farmers across the nation.

Dear Port of Portland: Please diversify

By GARY CARDWELL
For the Capital Press

Guest
comment
Gary Cardwell

Not all news is good news.

Three weeks ago, when the Port of Portland announced it had launched rail service out of its Terminal 6, after a multi-year stoppage of rail and storage container transfer, it seemed a cheery way to start the new year. But it was followed by a stark message in a consultant's report: The Port must diversify at T6 to offer a variety of pass-through options such as multi-modal, breakbulk, cars, etc.

The economic engine potential of movement of goods through the Port cannot be underestimated. A full one-third of Oregon's economy is based on goods movement dependent industries, with as many as 93,000 U.S. jobs being supported by the goods that move in and out of Oregon. Experts estimate it's a \$300 billion economic impact of imports and exports that move around and through our state.

But the possible launch of rail service at the Port highlighted a particularly worrisome element: The Port is using both public settlement money and the heavy hand of rail service owner and billionaire Warren Buffett to try to recoup its substantial losses over the past several years by attempting to compete with private, commercial entities.

Many questions now arise about subsidizing such a move with a public entity to both duplicate and compete with established commercial companies. Why the duplication if the recommendations are to diversify? And, why the unnecessary and disruptive duplication in our local marketplace?

The settlement money, arising from the shutdown and successive dispute, awarded the Port about \$11 million in public funds and drove out private operator ICTSI Oregon. And, during and after the stoppage, Oregon shippers were forced to absorb annual costs of more than \$15.1 million. During these high-profile problems, the last remaining container shipment and logistics business at Terminal 6 were driven away.

Unlike other ports on the West Coast, Terminal 6 is publicly owned by the State of Oregon. Now with the questionable use of the \$11 million in settlement money, the Port is going head-to-head with well established commercial entities. The result is that our own Port of Portland is actually underwriting new steamship service at other ports, including Tacoma.

Likewise, the Port's new partnership is with both Buffet and BNSF Railway Corp., which is headquartered in Texas, a far cry away from

local interest in improving Oregon's local economy.

That the Port of Portland has resolved the longstanding disruptions and shutdown is indeed encouraging. However, these issues also highlighted why the Port got out of the container business; it lost millions and millions of dollars running the container terminal. Data show Terminal 6 as far back as 2003 did not reach quantitative nor economic capacity, only running at about 50 percent of capacity. Now, we wonder if this new partnership will continue throwing good money away.

During and after the shutdown, we in the private sector worked even harder, shouldered more costs, made new investments and grew this sector. Our company expanded and grew our jobs base.

The container-by-rail sector in the Pacific Northwest shows continued growth with commercial investments, and limited public dollar infusion. It just makes good sense for commercial entities already doing it to keep up the good work. For example, Northwest Container Services has capitalized \$8 million in company growth, creating numerous local jobs.

In 2014, we retrofitted stacker machines with diesel particulate filters, so pollution can be mitigated — air quality has greatly improved and shows how private investment is working well.

And, on the horizon are the opportunities ahead in infrastructure growth from the Oregon's newly minted \$5 billion statewide "Connect Oregon" transportation package. One such leading proposal is poised to create a rail and intermodal logistics facility in our growing Willamette Valley. We partnered with eastern Oregon's Port of Morrow on a similar investment and have moved more than 30,000 containers through there, where transport would have otherwise occurred on roadways.

Industry watchers agree the troubles of the container shipping saga at Terminal 6 aren't likely to go away anytime soon. Many now wonder if the Port of Portland's expenditure of public money (and the loss of more than \$15 million annually) to subsidize and duplicate out-of-market infrastructure and compete with efficient commercial providers is really the right policy for Oregon.

Gary Cardwell is divisional vice president for Northwest Container Services Inc., a commercial logistics provider headquartered in Portland, Ore., that transports more than 25,000 containers each year.

Readers' views

Electoral College protects small states

Thank goodness for the amazing foresight our founding fathers had in designing our government. Today, we are often much too short-sighted. Such is the case with the effort by some, including some Oregon legislators, to eliminate the Electoral College.

One argument is that it is "undemocratic." Well, the founders intended that. John Adams and others were concerned about a "tyranny of the majority." That's why we rely on several "undemocratic" institutions to protect our most basic Constitutional rights and civil liberties. The Supreme Court and the U.S. Senate are "undemocratic" institutions. Amending the Constitution requires three-quarters of the states with no popular vote at all.

"Undemocratic," yet wise.

Does the Electoral College favor one party over the other? Not in my 92 years. Over my lifetime Democrats have held the White House 48 years and Republicans for 44. One thing the Electoral College has done extremely well is to ensure that every state matters in a presidential election. Without the Electoral College the six largest population states could elect the president by themselves.

Sometimes it's easy to forget the selfless genius those founding fathers put into the design of our republic. Nothing was by accident. Sometimes that genius is obscured by the politics of the moment. But these short-term frustrations should not rob us of this protective tapestry of checks and balances that have served us so well for over 240 years.

Liz VanLeeuwen
Halsey, Ore.