

# Sea lions continue to eat endangered fish

Bill supported by Northwest lawmakers

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
Capital Press

All the time, money and sacrifice to improve salmon and steelhead passage in the Willamette River won't mean a thing unless wildlife managers can get rid of sea lions feasting on the fish at Willamette Falls.

That was the message Tuesday from Shaun Clements, senior policy adviser for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, who met at the falls with Liz Hamilton, executive director of the Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association, and Suzanne Kunes, district director for U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Ore.

The group watched as sev-



George Plaven/Capital Press

Sea lions continue to prey on salmon and steelhead at Willamette Falls in Oregon, prompting a bill by Democratic Rep. Kurt Schrader to kill sea lions where they are causing the most problems.

eral sea lions patrolled the waterfalls and nearby fish ladders. Clements said there could be as many as 50-60 sea lions in the area on any given day in April or early May, and

the animals are responsible for eating roughly 20 percent of this year's already paltry winter steelhead run.

As of May 22, ODFW has counted just 2,086 winter

steelhead at Willamette Falls. That's less than half of the 10-year average and 22 percent of the 50-year average.

ODFW applied in October 2017 to kill sea lions from

Willamette Falls under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, though Clements said he does not expect a decision from the National Marine Fisheries Service until the end of the year. The department also tried relocating 10 California sea lions to a beach south of Newport, Ore. earlier this year, only to see the animals return in just six days.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is proposing to build a water temperature control tower and floating fish screen at Detroit Dam farther up the Willamette Basin to aid salmon and steelhead survival, a project that could cost up to \$250 million and leave farmers without water in the reservoir for up to two years.

Clements said it would be a wasted investment if not enough fish can even make it past the falls.

"Certainly for winter steelhead, if we don't deal with (sea lions), whatever we do

in the upper basin isn't going to help," Clements said. "If you're managing other sectors, you have to manage sea lions as well."

Schrader is co-sponsoring legislation to provide greater flexibility for managing sea lions in the future. The Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Predation Prevention Act would extend the authority for killing sea lions that prey on endangered salmon and steelhead to states and tribes.

The bill has support from a bipartisan group of Northwest lawmakers, including Reps. Jaime Herrera Beutler and Dan Newhouse of Washington, and Rep. Don Young of Alaska, all Republicans.

Clements said the Marine Mammal Protection Act — which was signed into law in 1972 — is too restrictive, and forces wildlife managers to wait too long before they can apply for a lethal take permit to protect fish.

## WSU crop tours begin soon

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

Farmers will have a chance to check out the latest grain varieties during Washington State University's upcoming crop tour season, which kicks off June 6 in the Horse Heaven Hills.

University and private breeders and researchers will be present at the various tour stops to provide specific background on the wheat and barley varieties.

"There's some newer stuff out there that I think is going to catch people by surprise," said Aaron Esser, WSU Extension Adams County director and interim director of WSU's variety testing program.

He said many growers are curious about Norwest Duet from Limagrain Cereal Seeds and Oregon State University.

"The farmers win by having a choice," he added. "The advantage is, they have more options out there. The difficult thing is, they have more options out there. It takes time and energy to figure out what option's best for their situation."

Esser expects discussions on falling numbers, the test that measures starch damage, seeding rates and new technologies.

### WSU crop schedule:

- Horse Heaven: 8 a.m., June 6, contact Aaron Esser at 509-659-3210
- Ritzville: 1 p.m., June 6, contact Esser at 509-659-3210
- Western Whitman County (LaCrosse): 9:30 a.m., June 7, contact Steve Van Vleet at 509-397-6290



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press File

Aaron Esser is interim director of Washington State University's variety testing program and director of the WSU Adams County Extension. WSU's crop tour schedule begins June 6 in the Horse Heaven Hills.

- Connell: 5 p.m., June 7, contact Esser at 509-659-3210

- Pendleton Field Day, Oregon: 7:30 a.m. June 12, contact Stewart Wuest at 541-278-4381

- Moro Field Day, Oregon: 7:30 a.m. June 13, contact Wuest at 541-278-4381

- WSU weed science, Pullman: 12:30 p.m. June 13, contact Drew Lyon at 509-335-2961

- Lind Field Day: 8:30 a.m., June 14, contact Bill Schillinger at 509-235-1933

- Harrington: 4 p.m., June 14, contact Diana Roberts at 509-477-2167

- St. Andrews: 5 p.m., June 15, contact Dale Whaley at 509-745-8531

- Eureka (cooperative with Oregon State University and Northwest Grain Growers): 3 p.m., June 18, contact Esser at 509-659-3210

- University of Idaho and Limagrain (Lewiston, Idaho): 8:30 a.m., June 19, contact Doug Finkelnburg at 208-799-3096
- Walla Walla: 1 p.m., June 20, contact Esser at 509-659-3210

- Dayton (cereals and legumes; cooperative with Oregon State University and Northwest Grain

- Growers): 8 a.m. June 22, contact Paul Carter at 509-382-4741

- Moses Lake (irrigated): 8 a.m., June 25, contact Andy McGuire at 509-754-2011, ext. 4313

- Creston: 3 p.m. June 25, contact Diana Roberts at 509-477-2167

- Wilke Farm Field Day, Daventport: 8 a.m. June 26; contact Esser at 509-659-3210

- Reardan: 2 p.m., June 26, contact Roberts at 509-477-2167

- Mayview: 9 a.m., June 27, contact Mark Heitstuman at 509-243-2009

- Anatone: 3:30 p.m., June 27, contact Heitstuman at 509-243-2009

- Fairfield: 7 a.m., June 28, contact Roberts at 509-477-2167

- St. John: 10 a.m., June 28, contact Van Vleet at 509-397-6290

- Lamont: 1:30 p.m., June 28, contact Van Vleet at 509-397-6290

- Bickleton: 11 a.m., June 29, contact Hannah Brause at 509-773-5817

- Farmington: 8 a.m., July 6, contact Van Vleet at 509-397-6290
- Palouse: 3:30 p.m., July 6, contact Van Vleet at 509-397-6290

## Wheat growers push back against Farm Bill critics

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

A Washington wheat representative declined to participate in a recent Washington Policy Center conference because a speaker claims agriculture is not experiencing a financial crisis and is calling for the end of farm subsidies.

The center is "an independent, nonprofit think tank that promotes sound public policy based on free-market solutions," according to its website.

Montana State University economics professor Vincent Smith spoke at the May 23 conference in Spokane.

In a 2017 American Enterprise Institute publication, Smith said agriculture is "neither experiencing a financial crisis nor about to enter an era of extreme financial stress."

He and his co-authors also said current net cash income is close to historical averages.

"Ideally, Congress would terminate many farm subsidy programs such as (Agriculture Risk Coverage), (Price Loss Coverage), federal crop insurance, the sugar program and marketing orders that waste scarce economic resources, raise some consumer prices and send taxpayer-funded checks to relatively wealthy and very wealthy individuals," the publication states.

The authors claim the programs do not provide measurable benefits to farmers in households with incomes below the federal poverty line.

"Some of the \$16 billion in federal funding currently tied up in the PLC, ARC and crop insurance subsidy program should be reallocated to programs that do provide

U.S. households with genuine positive benefits, one clear example of which is agricultural research," the article states.

Nicole Berg, secretary of the National Association of Wheat Growers and a Pater-son, Wash., wheat farmer, was invited to speak but declined.

Berg said the center believes in a free market and trade, but isn't necessarily working with the right definition for agriculture.

"They're talking about no government involvement at all in agriculture, but yet, how are you going to do that?" she said. "If you're going to say, 'Take away subsidies, take away crop insurance, take away the conservation titles,' farmers will go broke unless you have an escape hatch, and I haven't heard them come forth with a solution."

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## Raffle offers chance to compete in combine demolition derby

Proceeds from annual event go to town, show costs

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

LIND, Wash. — Lind Lions Club members are offering a chance to take the driver's seat in the big show.

The club is selling 500 raffle tickets for a shot at competing in the final round of the Lind Combine Demolition Derby.

"It is truly a unique event and true family event," said Josh Knodel, Lind Lions Club board member and a longtime combine derby driver with friend Matt Miller.

The unique event is in its 31st year.

The derby is June 8-10 in Lind, and includes cars and pickups at 6 p.m. June 8; pickup races are at 2 p.m. June 9 and combines are at 3 p.m. June 9. Grain truck and pickup races take place during intermission and soap box cars are at 2 p.m. June 10.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Head mechanic Jason Hulett, driver Tyran Doyle and pit crew members Derrick Laird and Bryden Laird with their combine. The Lind Lions Club is raffling a chance to sit in the combine during the final heat of the Lind Combine Demolition Derby on June 8-10.

**Online**  
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Knodel said. Raffle tickets are \$10. Tickets will be sold during the event.

About 12 drivers are expected to compete in the derby. Roughly 4,000 people are expected to attend the event, said derby chairman Mike Doyle.

Proceeds from the annual derby, averaging roughly \$25,000, go back to the town, Knodel said.