

Washington's second hemp year off to slow start

One state-approved planting in 2018

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

Washington's regulated hemp crop this year may consist entirely of 120 acres cultivated by the Colville Confederated Tribes in north-central Washington.

The tribe is the only grower so far to take part in the second season of the state Department of Agriculture's hemp program. If no other grower emerges, the state's hemp acreage will be one-third less than the 180 acres cultivated by five growers in 2017.

"I'd sure like to see it become more viable for farmers," said state Sen. Judy Wamick, the top-ranking Republican on the Senate Agriculture Com-

mittee. "I think it's something that we need to have a discussion with the Department of Agriculture about."

Washington is one of 35 states that have authorized state-supervised hemp farming, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. The supervision keeps hemp growers within federal law, which does not make a distinction between hemp and marijuana plants.

Hemp advocates continue to hope Congress will outright legalize hemp. In the meantime, states have set up programs with varying degrees of regulation.

Washington bans making CBD oil, an extract sold as a nutritional supplement. The state also forbids seeds from crossing state lines. Seeds must be imported with the approval of the Drug Enforcement Administration. The rules are



Courtesy of Colville Confederated Tribes

The Colville Confederated Tribes blesses a 60-acre hemp crop Aug. 17, 2017, near Keller, Wash. The tribe plans to double production this year, but it's the only licensed grower that has indicated it will plant hemp this year in Washington.

intended to keep Washington within federal law, but are not followed by all other states.

In another barrier, Washington bars growing hemp within 4 miles of marijuana fields or greenhouses to prevent cross-pollination.

Bonny Jo Peterson of the

Industrial Hemp Association of Washington said Tuesday that several potential growers have been stalled because they can't buy seeds from Oregon.

If that and other rules are relaxed by 2019, "next year will be ridiculous," she said.

"I'm going to say there would be hundreds of growers."

The agriculture department has not proposed any rule revisions, though there is the possibility that it will. The department plans to hire a hemp program coordinator, an agency spokesman said.

The Colville tribes will double the 60 acres it planted last year, tribal conservation director Jackie Richter said Monday in an email. She called hemp an "amazing crop" with economic potential and environmental benefits.

The Colville tribe also has a license to process hemp. Washington forbids transporting unprocessed hemp out of state.

"It's a slow process due to WA state's highly regulated program, but we have high hopes that they are working to make it more farmer friendly," Richter wrote.

Washington House Agriculture Committee Chairman Brian Blake, D-Aberdeen, said he was "frustrated that things aren't simpler."

Congress should legalize hemp instead of saddling states with supervising "so-called research projects," he said.

"It's silly where we are," Blake said. "It's just crazy. It's a totally innocuous plant used to make rope."

Washington's hemp program for 2018 got off to a bad start. The agriculture department suspended it over the winter months until state lawmakers appropriated money to resume processing applications in the spring.

Peterson said a few growers could still plant this year if they quickly solve their seed-supply problems. "I don't see how they can possibly pull it off," she said.



Rep. Joel Kretz, R-Wauconda

Ethics board: Lawmaker had right to howl about WSU wolf scientist

Panel dismisses Kretz complaint

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

A state lawmaker was performing a "core duty" of a citizen-legislator when he linked his discontent with wolf scientist Rob Wielgus to Washington State University's budget, according to the Legislative Ethics Board.

The board has dismissed accusations made by the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility against Rep. Joel Kretz, whose northeast Washington district has the vast majority of the state's wolves.

Kretz said June 8 he was defending constituents from Wielgus, whose actions included accusing ranchers of enticing wolves to attack cattle to provoke state wildlife managers into culling a pack. Wielgus' comments were condemned by WSU officials as wrong and inflammatory. Ranchers and wildlife managers said they received death threats in the wake of the well-publicized claim.

"I felt like we were paying someone with taxpayer dollars to damage my constituents," Kretz said. "Yeah, you're damn right, I'll stick my nose in it."

PEER formally complained last year that Kretz as "a rancher and avid predator hunter" acted in his self-interest when he sought to curtail funding for Wielgus' research on wolves and cougars.

The ethics board, made up mostly of current and former legislators, concluded last month that Kretz was acting on behalf of his district, not private gain.

Efforts to reach Wielgus and PEER to comment were unsuccessful. Wielgus last month took a \$300,000 settlement and left WSU to resolve claims he had been muzzled by the university at the behest of ranching interests. WSU denied any wrongdoing.

In its written opinion, the board said there was no documented confirmation that Kretz sought to have Wielgus sanctioned or reprimanded. Kretz did tell WSU officials that if it were up to him, Wielgus would be fired, but that the decision was for the school to make.

ODFW Commission reverses decision to 'uplist' marbled murrelet

Members had voted to list species as endangered in February meeting

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

In a surprising reversal, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission voted 4-2 June 7 not to reclassify the threatened marbled murrelet as an endangered species.

The vote came after hours of testimony from ODFW staff and environmental and timber industry advocates during day one of the commission's two-day meeting in Baker City, Ore.

Commissioners had voted in February to "uplist" as endangered the marbled murrelet, a small seabird that nests in old growth forests along the Oregon Coast.

The species was first listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act in



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission has decided not to put the marbled murrelet on the state list of endangered species.

1992. ODFW listed the marbled murrelet as a threatened species in 1995.

In June 2016, a coalition of environmental groups — including the Center for Biological Diversity, Cascadia Wildlands, Oregon Wild, Coast Range Forest Watch, Sierra Club and Audubon Society of Portland — petitioned ODFW to reclassify the birds as endangered. The species is already listed as endangered

in Washington and California.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission met Feb. 8-9 in Portland, and voted 4-2 to accept the petitioners' recommendation, with commissioners Bruce Buckmaster and Jim Bittle opposed.

Four months later, the commission effectively overturned its previous decision, voting 4-2 not to list the marbled murrelet as endangered. Commissioners Greg Wolley

and Holly Akenson remained in favor of uplisting.

"I didn't feel good about what we did in February," Bittle said. "I didn't like the information that we got."

Ultimately, the reversal came down to a shift in balance on the commission.

When commissioners voted in February, Chairman Michael Finley was excused from the meeting, creating an even number of votes. Commissioner Bob Webber, who initially opposed uplisting the marbled murrelet, relented and changed his vote to avoid a deadlock. At the time, Webber said his least favorite option would be to do nothing.

This time around, Finley was present, but former commissioner Laura Anderson — who voted in favor of uplisting — was gone after vacating her seat in March. Finley and Webber joined Buckmaster and Bittle in declining to uplist the species.

"I can't come to the conclusion that the population is at serious risk," Bittle said.

Timber workers also pleaded with the commission to reconsider the uplisting, which would have led to new logging restrictions to protect old growth trees and habitat for marbled murrelets on state-owned land.

Seth Barnes, director of forest policy for the Oregon Forest & Industries Council, said Oregon State University is conducting a 10-year study of marbled murrelets that will better inform a decision down the road.

"We need to stay as close as we can to the empirical data," Barnes said. "A vote to not uplist the marbled murrelet is not a vote for the timber industry. It's simply the right thing to do."

Jim James, executive director of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association, said that while new guidelines to protect the marbled murrelet would apply only to state lands, they would create an incentive for private landowners to liquidate any habitat associated with the birds.

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