

# Airport grant worries farmland preservationists

Extending runway suspected to invite more development

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

Farmer Mike Iverson grows fresh market vegetables along both sides of the Aurora State Airport, so a prospective runway expansion makes him nervous for several reasons.

An immediate concern would be any disruption to traffic on Keil Road, which runs directly south of the airport and is necessary for him to transport workers and equipment back and forth.

Noise and pollution from added air traffic are worrisome to Iverson, who is also troubled by the implications for development on surrounding farmland from a more bustling airport.

While such concerns about increasing the runway from 5,000 feet to 6,000 feet are nothing new, an upcoming proposal from the Oregon Department of Aviation has Iverson and other opponents on high alert.

On Sept. 26, the agency will ask the Oregon Emergency Board — which makes funding decisions when the Legislature isn't in session — for permission to apply for a \$33.3 million federal grant to expand the Aurora airport's runway.



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press  
An airplane departs the Aurora State Airport near Aurora, Ore. A proposed \$33.3 million grant application to expand the facility's runway has stirred alarm among opponents of the extension, including farmland preservationists.

The fear is that if the Federal Aviation Administration approves the application, proponents of the controversial proposal will be emboldened to sidestep normal regulations to expand the runway.

"There was no public process and they're trying to bypass the public process now," said Iverson.

The Oregon Department of Aviation counters that even if the Emergency Board does authorize applying for the grant, that hardly means the runway expansion would be exempt from requirements by local, state and federal governments.

"Once the money is there, it doesn't circumvent the permitting or planning process," said Matthew Maass, the agency's state airports manager.

Increasing the runway's length has already been ex-

tensively discussed during a "master planning" process for the airport, also paid for by the FAA, and the grant application is just another incremental step, he said.

The FAA doesn't subscribe to a philosophy of "if you build it, they will come" — it only funds such expansions for airports that have demonstrated their operations are already constrained, Maass said.

A study of the Aurora airport determined that more than 500 aircraft operate at less than full capacity by taking on less fuel or cargo to adapt to the shorter runway, he said.

Extending the runway by 1,000 feet would allow these aircraft to gain more airspeed and improve their lift, letting them take on more fuel and cargo, he said. Agricultural traffic could still be accom-

modated if the runway were longer.

"They are going to fund it based on the existing need today," Maass said, while acknowledging the expansion could increase air traffic at the facility.

If the runway was extended, the state would buy more land south of the facility to protect the airspace, but new buildings wouldn't be allowed in that area, he said. "Our intent would be to keep that farmland because it protects the approach to the airport."

Opponents of the project are dubious whether the runway extension would ever face full regulatory scrutiny, partly because of House Bill 4092, which would have eased land use laws for such an airport expansion onto farmland.

The bill died in committee earlier this year, but it's likely other legislation could again be proposed to "super-site" the expansion — especially if the funding is already in hand, said Ken Ivey, chairman of the Aurora-Butteville-Barlow Community Planning Organization.

"They don't want to go through the land use planning, they don't want the community involved," he said. "They will hammer a square peg into a round hole because they have the funding."



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press  
Matthew Beltran, grain inspection program assistant for the Washington State Department of Agriculture, holds up a mixture of wheat and water used in the falling number test Sept. 14 at the agency office in Spokane Valley, Wash.

## Grain elevators blend wheat to meet falling number standard

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

Washington grain elevators say they're finding success blending wheat to make sure it meets the industry standard for the falling number test.

HighLine Grain Growers is blending some carryover crop from 2017 to achieve the industry standard falling number score of 300, CEO Paul Katovich said.

"If you think you have a good handle on a lot that's 270 wheat and another lot that's 350, how much 350 do you need to make the 270 get over the line and average 300?" he said. "If it's blended well, it works just fine."

In the Columbia Basin, falling number test scores were 40 to 60 seconds higher than 300, said Damon Filan, manager of Tri-Cities Grain in Pasco, Wash.

The falling number test measures starch damage caused by rapid changes in temperature or rain during critical stages of wheat development. The test involves mixing water and wheat together and measuring how long a plunger takes to "fall" through it. A test score of 300 seconds is the industry standard.

Filan believes the industry is more prepared this year and able to better segregate wheat in areas where low scores occurred. The wheat industry was caught off guard in 2016, when starch problems caused much lower falling number test scores and cost farmers more than \$30 million in reduced prices.

He said the majority of the problems this year seemed to occur north of Interstate 90 and east of Highway 95, from Colfax to Spokane.

HighLine has two facilities testing wheat, and will keep at it throughout the year to determine the variability in the wheat sample, Katovich said.

"Every time we move a bushel from one bin to another, or from one location to another, we're testing again and again and again," he said. "That's where the extra expense and management comes in. Ultimately, you're trying to hit the mark on 300 when it goes to export."

The Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative says on its website that it will not discount for low falling numbers this year.

"There were a few isolated areas of low FNs at the start of harvest, but as harvest progressed northward and eastward, enough high FNs had been delivered to alleviate any potential problems," the website states.

Katovich said HighLine is discounting some wheat, but will work to absorb as much risk internally as possible.

The entire reason for the test is to make sure dough holds together and lasts the entirety of its mix cycle for customers overseas, Katovich said.

"That's why they set the line where they set it," he said. "...It's all about whether this product is going to be usable in making a cookie, bread or whatever."

Wheat that doesn't meet customer quality requirements won't get to end-users, Katovich said. "We don't want to undermine these markets. Our customers are the best customers in the world. ... We want to make sure that they have full confidence that every time we ship something to them, it's going to work for them."

Katovich will visit overseas customers in October. He expects the falling number question to come up with customers.

"They're going to ask about this. They're going to ask, 'Can we deliver?'" he said. "Yeah, we're going to deliver and they don't have to worry."

# Farmworkers reject UFW in long-fought election

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

With ballots counted five years after an election, farmworkers at California's largest peach and stone fruit farm have overwhelmingly rejected the United Farm Workers Union.

Workers at Gerawan Farms, in Fresno, voted 1,098 to 197, a 5-to-1 margin, in favor of decertifying the union as their representative, according to a Sept. 18 count by the state Agricultural Labor Relations Board. Another 635 disputed ballots were not counted.

The election was Nov. 5, 2013, but ALRB impounded the ballots at UFW's request, concluding that it was "impossible to know" whether the workers' request for an election represented their "true sentiments" when it came time to vote and alleging Gerawan manipulated the vote.

On Sept. 11, 2018, the California Supreme Court upheld a lower court order to count the ballots, rejecting arguments by UFW and the ALRB. It is one of the largest union decertification elections in California agricultural labor history.

Tom Nassif, president and CEO of Western Growers in Irvine, said it took the state's highest court to force ALRB to do the right thing.

"We now know the reason behind the ALRB's delay tactics, which lasted nearly five years. The ALRB knew or believed the outcome of the



Courtesy of Gerawan Farms  
Workers protest to have their votes counted in a UFW decertification election. The Sept. 18 count was 5-to-1 to decertify United Farm Workers Union from representing the workers.

vote was 'No Union' and was attempting to shield the UFW from the humiliation of its irrelevance," Nassif said.

"It is clear the UFW does not represent the voice of California's farmworkers and the results of this election must compel the state to stop acting as a surrogate of the UFW and move instead to guarantee justice for all agricultural workers," he said.

The ALRB will next rule on the disputed ballots and certify final results before taking up the broader issue of the fairness of the election.

"Our employees have been waiting since November 2013 for their votes to be counted. After a historic struggle, they achieved that right today, in spite of the efforts by the UFW and millions of taxpayer dollars spent by the ALRB to deny them that right," Gerawan

Farms said in a statement.

The right of workers to choose their representation is at the heart of what the ALRB is "designed to protect," the election is a "ringing endorsement" of that right and a "repudiation of concerted, unlawful and anti-democratic efforts to deny them that right," Gerawan Farms said.

Armando Elenes, UFW national vice president, told the Fresno Bee he was disappointed, not surprised and that the election should be thrown out because the ALRB found Gerawan committed multiple unfair labor practices.

George Radanovich, president of the California Fresh Fruit Association, applauded the outcome, saying farmworkers have a fundamental right to choose whether to be represented.

"The Agriculture Labor Re-

lations Board together with the United Farm Workers joined to work against the true voice of these employees, their votes," Radanovich said.

He joined Gerawan in asking the ALRB to certify the election results and decertify the UFW. They called on the Legislature and Gov. Jerry Brown to ensure ALRB's violation of farmworkers' freedom to choose never happens again.

UFW won an election at Gerawan in 1990. Five years later, workers rebuffed UFW-negotiated contracts. Gerawan contends the union abandoned the workers for more than 17 years. UFW reappeared in 2012 when a new state mandatory mediation law allowed the union to impose a contract. Workers didn't like that and chose the decertification election.

# WDFW shoots one wolf in Northeast Washington

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

A 50-pound juvenile wolf was shot and killed Sunday by a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife marksman in the Kettle River Range in Ferry County, the department reported Tuesday.

The wolf was one of four seen by a helicopter crew. The department said distinguishing between an adult and juvenile from the air is difficult this time of year because of the size of the young wolves.

The pack has been preying on cattle in the Colville National Forest in an area that Fish and Wildlife calls the Old Profanity Peak territory after

a former pack.

The department confirmed Monday that the pack had killed a cow. The cow was likely killed before the wolf was shot, according to the department.

The department previously confirmed that the pack had killed at least one calf and injured at least four more.

Fish and Wildlife says removing wolves as a last resort to stop attacks on livestock is consistent with the state's overall plan to re-establish wolves in Washington. A Thurston County judge on Sept. 14 denied a request by environmental groups to block the department from killing a wolf.

## Weekly fieldwork report

Item/description (Source: USDA, NASS; NOAA)	Ore.	Wash.	Idaho	Calif.
• Days suitable for fieldwork (As of Sept. 18)	6.5	6.8	6.6	7
• Topsoil moisture, surplus	0	0	0	0
• Topsoil moisture, percent short	93%	63%	69%	75%
• Subsoil moisture, surplus	0	0	0	0
• Subsoil moisture, percent short	92%	54%	70%	80%
• Precipitation probability (6-10 day outlook as of Sept. 18)	33% Below/Normal	33% Below/Normal	33-40% Above	Normal

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