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## THANKSGIVING IN WINE COUNTRY



Jim Bernau, the founder and CEO of Willamette Valley Vineyards in Turner, Ore.

Photos by George Plaven/Capital Press

### Oregon wineries prepare for their big weekend

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
Capital Press

**T**hanksgiving traditionally means food, family and football on TV, but for Willamette Valley wineries it also ushers in one of the biggest and most important sales weekends of the year.

Wine Country Thanksgiving is Nov. 23-25, with more than 140 wineries from Portland to Eugene opening their doors for special events, tastings and offering new releases. Some wineries, such as Ken Wright Cellars in Carlton, Ore., also host private gatherings for wine club members and invited guests the previous weekend, adding to the festivities.

Ken Wright, who founded the winery in 1994, said he figures to do 20 percent of his annual retail business around Thanksgiving.

"It's by far the most profitable weekend we have, by a mile," Wright said.

Wright was expecting more than 1,100 guests for a private barrel tasting Nov. 17, where wine lovers could get an early taste of 2018 Pinot noir from several nearby vineyards in the northern Willamette Valley. Harvest



Taylor Varuska, vineyard manager at Ken Wright Cellars in Carlton, Ore., pours a sample of 2018 Pinot noir straight from the barrel during a private tasting event Nov. 17 at the winery.

only just finished in October, and the wine has spent barely a month in oak barrels.

Judy Erdman and Richard Stinson, self-described "wine groupies" from Portland, walked between the rows of barrels in the dimly lit winery, savoring sips of the budding wine. Erdman said they never miss a chance to enjoy Thanksgiving in Oregon's wine country.

"It's after harvest. You get to talk to the winemakers and figure out how things went," she said. "You're looking to the future."

### Industry growth

Compared to other renowned wine regions around the world, Oregon's wine industry is still relatively young, with the first present-day wineries established in the late 1950s.

Since then, the number of wineries in Oregon has grown to 769, along with 1,114 vineyards and \$5.61 billion in annual statewide economic impact. Between 2013 and 2016, winery sales increased 46 percent to \$529

Turn to **WINE**, Page 11



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife OR-7, the wolf that wandered to the Rogue River drainage from northeastern Oregon, is seen in this file photo. Diverse Northwest views figured in the U.S. House debate on whether to deny gray wolves federal protection.

### U.S. House

## Wolf debate features OR-7, WSU, 'idiots'

### Wolves seen as check on suburban deer

By **DON JENKINS**  
Capital Press

The U.S. House debate Nov. 16 on de-listing gray wolves in the lower 48 was tinged with Northwest references to OR-7, Washington ranchers and the thought of turning lose apex predators in Portland.

A Virginia lawmaker cited a Washington State University scientist's assertion that shooting wolves increases attacks on livestock. Oregon Rep. Earl Blumenauer said wolves balance ecosystems and noted the danger suburban motorists face of crashing into deer. Another Oregon congressman, Peter DeFazio, said he wished his southwestern Oregon district had more wolves and dismissed de-listing as idiocy.

The House could have used the hour set aside for the debate on wolves to work on education policy, the budget or a farm bill, said DeFazio, D-Springfield. "But, no, we are here on a talking point for a few idiots," he said.

The House, still controlled by Republicans for a few more weeks, voted 196-180 to pass H.R. 6784. The measure would strip wolves of federal protection in California, and the western two-thirds of Oregon and Washington. Wolves already have been de-listed in Idaho and the eastern one-third of Oregon and Washington.

DeFazio was also dismissive of the bill's chances of becoming law. "By the way, it's going nowhere in the Senate," the veteran congressman said.

Washington Republican Cathy McMorris Rodgers said ranchers in her state have been affected by wolves for many years.

"Each year, we are losing hundreds of livestock to wolves and costing our economy millions of dollars," she said.

"In Eastern Washington, and specifically in northeastern Washington, predation on calves has become common."

Rep. Don Beyer, whose Virginia district borders Washington, D.C., said he would "love to see the gray wolves in Virginia someday."

Turn to **WOLVES**, Page 11

## Orca task force recommends looking at Snake River dams

### Farm Bureau withholds blessing

By **DON JENKINS**  
Capital Press

Adding 10 orcas to Puget Sound over the next decade will require more fish habitat and possibly removing four Lower Snake River dams, ac-

cording to a report released Nov. 16 by a governor's task force.

The Washington Farm Bureau was one of six organizations on the 47-member task force that abstained from voting to send the report to Gov. Jay Inslee. The Farm Bureau couldn't endorse some of the report's 36 proposals, including taking another look at

removing Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose and Lower Granite dams, director of government relations Tom Davis said.

"That's a non-starter for us," he said. "It just prolongs the conversation."

The task force, which will continue to meet, responds

Turn to **ORCAS**, Page 11



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Orcas, also known as killer whales, travel off the coast of Washington. A governor's task force may recommend looking at removing four Lower Snake River dams to help orcas have more fish to eat.

We're Moving!

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