

OSU to seek \$30 million boost for research, Extension, forest lab

Funding request represents 25 percent increase over current biennium's budget

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

From left: Bill Boggess, executive associate dean of Oregon State University's College of Agricultural Sciences, Alan Sams, OSU's dean of Agricultural Sciences and director of the Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station, and Scott Reed, OSU's vice provost and director of its Extension Service.

and benefits.

University leaders are optimistic about the state's positive revenue forecast and note that Oregon's seven public universities — which are funded separately from research, Extension and the forest lab — have also asked for a 25 percent budget boost. "We're symmetric with that increase," Boggess said.

Exactly which positions would be funded with the \$30 million has yet to be decided, with OSU seeking input from commodity crop commissions and others who benefit from the statewide programs.

"We're in active discussions now with stakeholders," said Scott Reed, director of OSU's Extension Service.

Agricultural groups and other supporters will likely help OSU leaders lobby law-

makers to approve the sizable funding increase, which is expected to be vetted by the education or natural resources subcommittees of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means during the 2019 legislative session.

"The statewides enjoy a very high level of confidence statewide," Reed said.

With many newly elected lawmakers beginning their terms next year, it's imperative to inform them about the critical role that OSU's services perform in supporting natural resource industries, said Boggess.

"Educating new legislators is a non-stop challenge," he said. "We've had good support from both sides of the aisle. The bigger challenge is there are a lot of new faces, period."



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

OR-7 trots past a trail camera carrying what a wildlife biologist said is an elk leg in the Southern Oregon Cascades, April 14, 2017. Oregon's famous wandering wolf formed the Rogue pack in 2014, which is responsible for a recent spate of livestock attacks in Jackson and Klamath counties.

Rogue pack kills another cow in Southern Oregon

Latest depredation makes five in three weeks

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is trying again to place a GPS collar on at least one wolf from the Rogue pack in Southern Oregon following a recent spate of attacks on livestock in Jackson and Klamath counties.

State wildlife officials confirmed the latest kill of an 11-month-old heifer at a ranch northeast of Medford on Nov. 10. It is the fifth depredation attributed to the Rogue pack over the last three weeks.

Gray wolves in Oregon west of highways 395, 78 and 95 are managed by the federal government. John Stephenson, USFWS wildlife biologist and wolf coordinator, said he is working to collar a wolf from the Rogue pack to keep closer tabs on their location and movements.

"They move around a lot at this time of year," Stephenson said. "You just have to put (traps) in one area and wait them out."

The Rogue pack was designated in 2014 when Oregon's famous wandering wolf, OR-7, settled in the area with a mate and had their first litter of pups. Today, the pack is estimated at seven or eight members.

A collar on OR-7 has not worked since 2015. Agencies successfully collared another female wolf from the pack,

OR-54, last fall, though it later dispersed into Northern California.

Veril Nelson, wolf committee co-chairman for the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, said collaring wolves is a top priority for ranchers.

"We'd like to have a collar on a wolf in every pack in Oregon, so that ranchers can be prepared when they're in the neighborhood," Nelson said. "That's one of the things we'd like to see in the next five-year wolf plan."

The Rogue pack has certainly been keeping ranchers on their toes.

On Nov. 10, a producer near Butte Falls reported three dead cows in the same 50-acre private pasture. A biologist from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife examined each carcass, determining that one of the heifers was killed by wolves within the past three days.

A second carcass had been mostly eaten, leaving the cause of death as "unknown," while the third showed no signs of trauma or tooth scrapes usually associated with a predator attack. It was ruled as "other."

Just three weeks earlier, the Rogue pack was responsible for killing four cows in rapid succession near Fort Klamath in the Wood River Valley at the eastern end of the wolves' territory. The pack also killed three more calves and a guard dog earlier this year at Mill-Mar Ranch, about 10 miles north of where the most recent attack took place in Jackson County.

Stephenson said it is dif-

ficult to know why livestock predations are on the rise, though it could be due in part to the Rogue pack growing in size. OR-7 is also nine years old now, he said, and it is possible that as wolves get older they spend more time around ranches instead of up in the woods where they should be — as was the case with OR-7's father, OR-4, the alpha male of the Imnaha pack in northeast Oregon.

"There definitely is a relationship with bigger packs tending to be involved with depredations more frequently," Stephenson said.

Wolves are a federally endangered species in western Oregon, and Stephenson said there are no plans to kill wolves to curb livestock attacks. Instead, he is helping ranchers to put up non-lethal deterrents like fladry fencing and Foxlights.

"We're trying to solve the problem with non-lethal deterrents," Stephenson said. "They can be very effective."

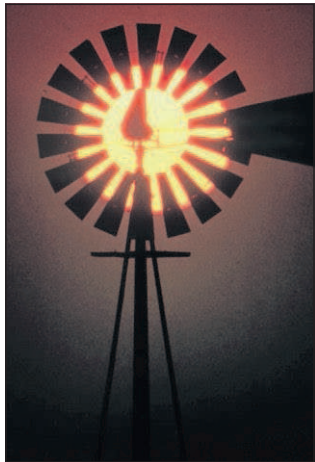
Nelson said he feels ranchers are doing everything they can with non-lethal tools to protect livestock from wolves. Having collars in every pack would at least give ranchers a heads-up when they are nearby, he said, though he doubts whether they can get that assurance from ODFW in the next Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

"At the same time, they don't want us to go to lethal take on these wolves," Nelson said. "I don't know what the heck they expect ranchers to do. I guess just suffer the losses."

Warm winter best bet for Northwest

No strong signal for precipitation

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press



Courtesy NOAA

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts Washington, Oregon, Idaho and California will have a warmer than normal December, January and February.

the eastern half of Idaho. The climate center sees no factor strongly influencing precipitation — wet or dry — for Washington, Oregon, western Idaho and the northern tip of California.

Sea-surface temperatures along the equator were 0.5 to 1

degree Celsius above normal in the past week, according to the center. The temperatures are in the range of a weak to borderline moderate El Nino, but the ocean conditions are still considered neutral, neither warm nor cool.

The warmer temperatures must persist to qualify as an El Nino. "The atmospheric conditions associated with a developing El Nino event remain modest at best," according to NOAA's written discussion on the three-month outlook.

The sea-surface temperature in the central Pacific is expected to peak in January at about 1 degree Celsius above normal, the threshold for a moderate El Nino. NOAA anticipated the ocean will slowly cool back to neutral conditions over the rest of the winter and spring.

In El Nino winters, temperatures typically are a few degrees higher than normal. Less snow accumulates in the mountains to melt in the spring for irrigation.

Troubled loans increase for Farm Credit System

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

The Farm Credit System of ag lenders has seen a spike in troubled loans as many farmers struggle with low prices, even as profits have grown for the banks themselves.

Non-performing assets, such as loans that are past due, shot up about 20 percent during the system's first three quarters of 2018, to \$2.4 billion, while the level of charged-off bad debt more than doubled, from \$21 million to \$53 million.

Even so, the system's total loan volume rose nearly 2 percent in that time, to \$263.6 billion, which helped to boost its net income to \$4 billion, up

from \$3.7 billion at this point last year.

The increase in non-performing assets and charge-off is not unexpected given financial problems experienced among producers of dairy, hogs and soybeans, said Hal Johnson, senior financial analyst for the Farm Credit Administration, which regulates the system.

"We recognize that certain ag sectors have been under stress for several years," Johnson said.

Though the agency expects the system to experience additional credit quality deterioration in the future, the network as a whole is well-capitalized and poised to handle risk, he said.

"The system is financially sound," Johnson said.

With retaliatory tariffs continuing to be imposed on crops and livestock products, combined with overproduction of certain commodities, many U.S. farmers generally face a challenging economic outlook, he said.

"These will present headwinds for the agricultural sector," Johnson said.

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Weekly Fieldwork Report

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Item/description (Source: USDA, NASS; NOAA)	Ore.	Wash.	Idaho	Calif.
• Days suitable for fieldwork (As of Nov. 14)	6.5	4.9	6	7
• Topsoil moisture, surplus	0	2%	1%	0
• Topsoil moisture, percent short	63%	44%	31%	75%
• Subsoil moisture, surplus	0	2%	2%	0
• Subsoil moisture, percent short	79%	47%	49%	75%
• Precipitation probability (6-10 day outlook as of Nov. 20)	33-40% Above	40% Above	33% Above/Normal	Normal/33% Below

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