

Even after Farm Bill, hemp needs help from lawmakers

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Federal lawmakers have lightened up on hemp, but the non-intoxicating plant still needs an assist from Washington's marijuana-embracing legislators.

The new Farm Bill takes hemp off the federal list of illicit drugs, but it does not change state hemp laws.

In Washington, hemp can't be grown within 4 miles of marijuana. That regulation helps explain why Washington has lagged behind other states in growing and processing hemp.

Washington has more than 1,200 licensed marijuana growers, according to the State Liquor and Cannabis Board. A large portion of the state is closed to hemp.

Furthermore, a marijuana producer can displace a hemp farmer. Even if the hemp farmer plants first, the later-arriving marijuana grower takes precedent.

"Why would you start a 1,000-acre hemp farm in Washington, when a marijuana farmer with one lousy greenhouse can come along, and you have to move?" asked Joy Beckerman, president of the Hemp Industries Association, a national advocacy group.

Hemp Northwest, a food maker based in Hood River, Ore., wants to press Washington-grown hemp seeds into vegetable oil and protein powder, but its only Washington supplier is the Colville Confederated Tribes, which raises hemp on its reservation.

"That 4-mile rule is definitely a big hinderance," the company's CEO, Tonia Farman, said. "I keep hearing from farmers that that's a huge barrier that keeps people from wanting to get into industrial hemp in Washington."

The state Department of Agriculture adopted the 4-mile rule in 2017 to pre-



Don Jenkins/Capital Press File

Hemp consultant Joy Beckerman watches hemp being planted in a field near Moses Lake in Central Washington. The legislature will have to improve the state law on hemp cultivation before the crop can thrive in the state, she says.

vent hemp from cross-pollinating with Washington's lucrative marijuana plants. The department originally proposed a 3-mile buffer. Marijuana advocates reportedly asked for a buffer as big as 10 miles. It wasn't a horrible outcome for hemp, considering marijuana's ability to generate government revenue.

The state collected \$319

million in taxes and license fees from the marijuana industry in the most-recent fiscal year. Meanwhile, the state lost money regulating hemp.

The state now has nine licensed hemp farmers or processors. That doesn't reflect the level of interest, Hemp Industries of Washington lobbyist Bonny Jo Peterson said. "A lot of it is

waiting for the state to get its act together," she said.

Agriculture department spokesman Hector Castro said the department has no plans to propose changing the 4-mile rule or any other of its hemp rules.

"It just doesn't make sense for us to get ahead of the Legislature," he said. "We're aware the 4-mile buffer is something the hemp industry has had some frustrations with."

The state agriculture department wrote the rules based on the 2014 Farm Bill. The bill allowed hemp farming under state supervision, but did not change hemp's status as a controlled substance. As a result, Washington controls the seed supply and prohibits the manufacture of cannabidiol, or CBD.

CBD has operated in a gray area. It's a big part of the hemp industry and accepted in many states, even though the Drug

Enforcement Administration has maintained it's illegal.

The U.S. Hemp Roundtable, a trade group, said in a legal analysis that the Farm Bill erases any doubt that CBD is legal. Efforts to obtain comment from the DEA were unsuccessful.

Peterson said she thinks legislators will lift the CBD restriction. She said Peterson said she expects opposition from some marijuana growers, but predicted the 4-mile buffer will be dropped or reduced. "I'm very confident our legislators want to see (hemp) move forward," she said.

Efforts to obtain comment from the Washington CannaBusiness Association, a trade group, were unsuccessful.

Beckerman was a leading advocate for allowing hemp to be grown in Washington. She has since moved to New York, but remains in contact with Northwest hemp organizations.

Oregon's sage grouse population drops 10%

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Oregon's sage grouse population was down 10 percent in 2018, which reflects unfavorable weather conditions rather than the efficacy of recovery efforts, according to state wildlife regulators.

Aerial and ground surveys of breeding sites, or leks, conducted by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife pegged the number of sage grouse at 18,421, down from 20,510 the previous year.

The change in populations wasn't uniform across the state, ranging from a 6 percent increase in the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's Prineville District in Central Oregon to a 14 percent decline in the Vale District in Eastern Oregon.

The greater sage grouse was long a candidate for Endangered Species Act protection, which ranchers fear would lead to further grazing restrictions, but the federal government decided against listing the bird in 2015 partly due to habitat conservation agreements by the livestock industry.

Reproductive success was lower than average due to dry weather, with such fluctuations not unusual in the sage grouse population, testified Kevin Blakely, ODFW's wildlife division deputy administrator, before the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources on Dec. 12.

Specifically, soil moisture must be recharged during winter and spring rains must ensure the growth of forbs that attract insects, which the sage grouse eats, Blakely said.

Drought in 2017 caused fewer chicks to survive and reduced the bird's population this year, he said.

Blakely's presentation



Jerret Raffety/Associated Press

Drought appears to be a factor in the number of greater sage grouse in Eastern Oregon, according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

was part of an update for lawmakers on the status of sage grouse recovery efforts, but a partnership dedicated to the bird's conservation, SageCon, also plans to seek more than \$1 million in additional state funds for preservation activities next year.

One of the main strategies of sage grouse conservation — rangeland wildfire suppression — was successful in 2018, with 20,000 acres of the bird's habitat burned compared to 100,000 acres in 2017, Blakely said.

Rural fire protection associations, which are operated by ranchers and other volunteers across 16 million acres in Oregon, were instrumental in limiting the spread of rangeland fires, testified John O'Keefe, a Lake County rancher and past president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association.

Despite having the same number of fire ignitions in 2018, fewer acres burned due to the diligence of RFPAs, whose volunteers are familiar with local terrain, fire fuel sources and travel routes, O'Keefe said.

"These are a significant force," he said. "These are the things that can make an ignition a small event."

Inslee orca plan includes look at breaching dams

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — A \$1.1 billion orca-rescue plan rolled out Thursday by Washington Gov. Jay Inslee includes \$750,000 for another look at breaching four dams on the Lower Snake River.

The dams in southeast Washington generate electricity and allow farmers to move grain by barge down the Columbia River's main tributary. Inslee said a task force would study whether wind and solar power could replace hydropower and whether trucks and trains could replace river traffic.

"We need a really thorough evaluation of that, and I'm pleased that we're starting that serious discussion because we need to have it," Inslee said at a press conference on a two-year, \$54.3 billion spending plan he will present to the 2019 Legislature.

It would be a 21 percent increase over the operating budget lawmakers enacted in 2017. Inslee proposed nearly \$4 billion in new or higher taxes, some of which would go to the separate transportation budget to remove culverts.

Inslee based his orca plan on recommendations from a task force he created last spring. The population of South Resident orcas, three pods of killer whales in Puget Sound and off Washington's coast, has declined to 74 from a peak of 98 in 1995. Experts attribute the drop to a lack of fish, pollution and noisy vessels.

The Washington Farm Bureau was on the task force, but declined to endorse the report sent to Inslee. The Farm Bureau said it backed many of the recommendations, but could not support another look at breaching Ice Harbor, Little Goose, Lower Granite and Lower Monumental dams.

Some 40 percent of the nation's wheat moves through the Lower Snake River's systems of dams and locks, according to the Army



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee talks at a press conference Dec. 13 in Olympia about his \$1.1 billion proposal to help the health of orcas. The plan includes studying whether to breach four dams on the Lower Snake River in southeast Washington.

Corps of Engineers, the dams' operator. The corps has studied and rejected breaching the dams. A federal judge in 2016 ordered another review that may be finished by 2020.

"By forming this work group, we will have a good state voice in that federal decision-making process," Inslee said.

Environmental groups pushed for a state-level look at breaching the dams. Orca task force co-chairwoman Stephanie Solien said the task force heard more about the dams than other issues.

"I think we need to bring people to the table to talk. They're talking over each other," she said. "My hope is we can help with that."

Inslee said humans and orcas were having a "shared moment."

"We share so much with the orcas. We share about the same body temperature. We share about the same heartbeat rate. We share close familiar social interactions and bonds, and we share the need to defeat

environmental degradation," he said. "When we save the orcas from toxins, we save ourselves; when we save them from climate change, we save ourselves; when we save them from pollution, we save ourselves."

Pillars of the orca plan include \$363 million in the capital budget for salmon recovery and \$296 million in the transportation budget to remove culverts. The state was already under a federal court order to remove fish barriers. Other parts of the plan include \$75.7 million to improve hatcheries, \$19 million to

pay landowners to protect habitat and \$6.2 million for enforcement of water-quality laws.

Inslee's budget proposal includes a new capital gains tax projected to raise \$975 million the first year. The 9 percent tax would apply to the sale of stocks bonds and other assets of more than \$25,000 for individuals and \$50,000 for married couples. Sales of homes, timber and farms would be exempt from the tax.

Inslee also proposes to raise revenue by raising taxes on some home sales and business taxes on services.

Presented by
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Weekly Fieldwork Report

Ore.

Wash.

Idaho

Calif.

Item/description (Source: USDA, NASS; NOAA)	Ore.	Wash.	Idaho	Calif.
• Snow water equivalent*	74.8%	87.4%	81.8%	92.1%
• Percent area in drought	100%	79.6%	65.7%	92.2%
• Avg. temperature, 6-10 day outlook (Percent chance deviation from normal)	Normal/ 33% below	Normal/ 33% below	33% below	Normal/ 33% below
• Precipitation, 6-10 day outlook (Percent chance deviation from normal)	50-70% above	50-60% above	60-70% above	50-70% above
• Soil moisture anomaly (Monthly deviation from normal)	Below normal	Below normal	Normal/ Below normal	Below normal

*Aggregate average percent of median as of Dec. 19. Medians calculated for the period from 1981-2010. Sources: USDA, NRCS; NOAA, www.ca.gov/; www.drought.gov/

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