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THE YEAR AHEAD



OREGON



WASHINGTON



IDAHO

What farmers can expect when legislators in Oregon, Washington and Idaho convene

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

OREGON: Another try for 'cap-and-trade'

SALEM — Though Oregon's upcoming legislative session will only last five weeks, lawmakers are expected to revive climate legislation in 2020 after the failure of last year's controversial proposal.

A carbon "cap-and-trade" bill passed the House in 2019 but stirred up powerful resistance in the farm and timber communities, ultimately failing to get a vote in the Senate.

Due to ballot initiatives planned for the November election that propose to phase out Oregon's carbon emissions entirely, lawmakers in the House and Senate are feeling pressure to resubmit a climate proposal, said Jenny Dresler, a lobbyist for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

Under a cap-and-trade system, carbon emissions are capped at a certain level and companies can earn credits for reducing their output below that threshold. The credits can then be sold to other firms that exceed it.

An early legislative concept being floated in the Senate would initially limit that scheme as it pertains to fuels to the Portland metropolitan area, then roll it out to other cities, Dresler said. The idea is to mitigate the adverse economic effects on rural residents who face longer commutes, which was a major sticking point with the last proposal.

"There is some momentum being made to address the concerns of the opposition," Dresler said.

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Northwest political party control by state

*As of July, 2018

State	Population	Governor	House	Speaker	Senate	President
Oregon	4.19 million*	Kate Brown (D)	38 Democrats, 22 Republicans	Tina Kotek (D)	18 Democrats, 12 Republicans	Peter Courtney (D)
Washington	7.54 million*	Jay Inslee (D)	56 Democrats, 41 Republicans, 1 vacancy	Laurie Jinkins (D)	29 Democrats, 20 Republicans	Cyrus Habib (D)
Idaho	1.75 million*	Brad Little (R)	55 Republicans, 13 Democrats, 1 vacancy	Scott Bedke (R)	28 Republicans, 7 Democrats	Brent Hill (R)

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Capital Press research

Capital Press graphic

Court orders EPA to write temperature control plans

Lawsuit originally filed by environmental groups in 2017

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

A federal appeals court has ordered the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to finalize a long-overdue plan to lower water temperatures for endangered fish in the Columbia and Snake rivers.

The ruling by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals is likely to intensify the ongoing

debate over breaching four Lower Snake River dams in Eastern Washington to increase salmon and steelhead runs.

Environmental and commercial fishing groups sued the EPA in 2017 to protect Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead from dangerously high river temperatures. Water exceeding 68 degrees is considered particularly lethal for the fish, causing them to struggle migrating upstream and leaving them susceptible to disease.

The plaintiffs — including Columbia Riverkeeper, Snake River Waterkeeper, Idaho Rivers United, the Institute for Fisheries Resources and Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations — highlighted the summer of 2015, when an estimated 250,000 Snake River sockeye salmon died before they could spawn.

Brett VandenHeuvel, executive director of Columbia Riverkeeper, said the slack water reservoirs behind hydroelectric dams on the rivers are a major culprit when it comes to heating water.

"The reservoirs have created this hot water problem, and climate change is pushing it over the edge," VandenHeuvel said. "We need solutions quickly, and they need to be big solutions."

Under the Clean Water Act, states are required to identify and issue pollution controls for imperiled waterways. The standards — known as "Total Maximum Daily Load," or abbreviated TMDL — can address high levels of specific pollutants, such as nitrogen, or conditions such as water temperature or turbidity.

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Growers say \$15.83 H-2A minimum wage 'too high'

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WAPATO, Wash. — The minimum wage for H-2A-visa foreign guestworkers in Washington and Oregon increased 5.32% on Jan. 2, from \$15.03 to \$15.83 per hour, making it the highest in the nation.

The national average is \$13.99 per hour, up 5.58%.

Rob Valicoff, president of Valicoff Fruit Co., in Wapato, is mad about it and says all the other growers he talks to aren't happy either.

He blames his own congressman, Rep. Dan Newhouse, for not getting more wage and housing relief for growers in the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, H.R.



Rob Valicoff

5038. The bill passed the House on Dec. 11, and Newhouse and Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., are the chief sponsors.

"Newhouse didn't do his job. He started his compromise too low. He wants to give workers already here amnesty and a free ride. I'm OK with some of that, but he didn't do squat on H-2A," Valicoff said.

The bill's one-year freeze on the H-2A minimum wage, known as the Adverse Effect Wage Rate, or AEWR, isn't enough and subsequent

annual increases of 3.25 to 4.25% are too high, Valicoff said.

Jon DeVaney, president of the Washington State Tree Fruit Association, said the \$15.83 per hour will "be a challenge for many growers who are already operating below the break-even point."

AEWR increases "are unsustainable" and that's why the Lofgren-Newhouse bill addresses it, DeVaney said.

Growers should be able to pay the state minimum wage or prevailing wage and recoup some housing costs from workers, as is allowed in the non-agricultural H-2B program, Valicoff said.

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Adverse Effect Wage Rate

The new hourly minimum wage for H-2A-visa foreign guestworkers takes effect Jan. 2.

State	Adverse Effect Wage Rate 2019	Adverse Effect Wage Rate 2020	Percent change
Ore., Wash.	\$15.03	\$15.83	5.3%
Kan., Neb., N.D., S.D.	14.38	14.99	4.2
Hawaii	14.73	14.90	1.2
Calif.	13.92	14.77	6.1
Iowa, Mo.	13.34	14.58	9.3
Ill., Ind., Ohio	13.26	14.52	9.5
Mich., Minn., Wis.	13.54	14.40	6.4
Conn., Maine, Mass., N.H., N.Y., R.I., Vt.	13.25	14.29	7.9
Colo., Nev., Utah	13.13	14.26	8.6
Idaho, Mont., Wyo.	13.48	13.62	1
Del., Md., N.J., Pa.	13.15	13.34	1.4
Ariz., N.M.	12.00	12.91	7.6
N.C., Va.	12.25	12.67	3.4
Okla., Texas	12.23	12.67	3.6
Kty., Tenn., W.V.	11.63	12.40	6.6
Ark., La., Miss.	11.33	11.83	4.4
Ala., Ga., S.C.	11.13	11.71	5.2
Fla.	11.24	11.71	4.2

Source: National Council of Agricultural Employers

Capital Press graphic

