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IDAHO

NW LEGISLATURES TAKE UP ISSUES IMPACTING AG

By Capital Press

The three Northwest legislatures go to work this month, addressing a wide variety of issues that will impact their state's farmers and ranchers. In Oregon and Washington, the changing climate tops the governors' legislative agendas. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and Washington Gov. Jay Inslee hope to help stanch global climate change by capping carbon production in their states. Though both proposals would exempt farmers and ranchers directly, the

prospect of higher costs for fuel, energy and fertilizers caused by the caps poses a concern for agriculture. Meanwhile, in Idaho, legislators and new Gov. Brad Little must find a way to pay for a voter-mandated expansion of Medicaid coverage for Idaho residents even as tax revenues sink lower than originally forecast.

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Northwest political party control by state

*As of July, 2018



Oregon

Population: 4.19 million*

Gov.: Kate Brown (D)

House: 38 Democrats, 22 Republicans

Senate: 18 Democrats, 12 Republicans



Washington

Population: 7.54 million*

Gov.: Jay Inslee (D)

House: 57 Democrats, 41 Republicans

Senate: 28 Democrats, 21 Republicans



Idaho

Population: 1.75 million*

Gov.: Brad Little (R)

House: 56 Republicans, 14 Democrats

Senate: 28 Republicans, 7 Democrats

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

Capital Press graphic

INSIDE

- **Oregon:** Carbon cap, pesticide restrictions
- **Washington:** Climate, higher taxes
- **Idaho:** Tight revenue, initiative cloud picture



Oregon Gov. Kate Brown



Washington Gov. Jay Inslee



Idaho Gov. Brad Little



Holly Dilleluth/For the Capital Press

Standing grain is left for migrating birds as part of the Walking Wetlands Program in the Klamath Basin. Environmental groups and agricultural organizations are suing over management of the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Klamath refuge management attacked from all sides

Environmentalists, farm groups argue with federal government in court battle

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

MEDFORD, Ore. — The federal government has been defending its management of six national wildlife refuges against legal challenges from both farmers and environmentalists.

The U.S. Interior Department is facing three lawsuits filed by three environmental groups who allege its plans for the 200,000-acre Klamath

Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex along the Oregon-California border violates several federal laws.

A fourth complaint from six farms and agricultural groups alleges the agency has unlawfully exceeded its authority by restricting leases of refuge land for agricultural purposes.

The agricultural plaintiffs — Tulelake Irrigation District, Klamath Water Users Association, Tally Ho Farms Partner-

ship, Four H Organics, Woodhouse Farming and Seed Co. and Tulelake Growers Association — claim a comprehensive conservation plan adopted in 2017 will substantially reduce acreage available for farming within the refuge complex.

“Agriculture is a purpose of this lease land. It has been for 114 years. It’s never been used for anything else,” said Paul Simmons, attorney for the Tulelake Irrigation District and associated plaintiffs, during oral arguments Jan. 8.

Under the plan, certain new agricultural leases will be subject to “special use permits” that

include new requirements for “compatibility” between agriculture and waterfowl habitat.

These “stipulations” include flooding fields after harvest, limiting tillage in the autumn, prohibiting the planting of genetically engineered crops and disallowing the hazing of waterfowl during the first four months of the year.

According to the farm plaintiffs, these restrictions will render agriculture less productive and undermine its future viability in the area by reducing revenues and creating

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Environmental groups pull out of Oregon Wolf Plan talks

Revision to go before ODFW Commission in March

By GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

CLACKAMAS, Ore. — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is forging ahead with a long-overdue update of the state's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, even as four environmental groups withdrew from mediation and announced they will oppose it.

In a Jan. 4 letter to Gov. Kate Brown, representatives for Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands, Defenders



ODFW

Three environmental groups have pulled out of discussions over the revision of Oregon's wolf plan.

of Wildlife and the Center for Biological Diversity said they will no longer participate in meetings hosted by ODFW to find common ground on wolf management

with hunters and ranchers.

Wolf advocates criticized the negotiations, describing the process as flawed and skewed in favor of killing wolves to protect livestock,

rather than prioritizing non-lethal forms of deterrence. The groups slammed ODFW staff for “leading us to a seemingly predetermined outcome,” despite the agency paying more than \$100,000 to hire a professional mediator.

On Jan. 8, the Wolf Plan work group — or what was left of it — met for the final time in Clackamas, Ore., with remaining members from the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Hunters Association and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Shannon Hurn, deputy director of fish and wildlife programs for ODFW, said the group's input and

feedback helped inform revisions to the Wolf Plan, which staff will present to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission on March 16 in Salem.

Though they did not reach a consensus on the plan, Hurn said she felt the meetings were worth the time and investment.

“This is probably our most contentious wildlife subject,” she said. “We did hear what was important to folks, and where there is some agreement.”

Ranchers argue they need lethal control of problem wolves to protect their businesses.

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