

Oregon joins lawsuit challenging EPA over chlorpyrifos

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

SALEM — Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum is joining a lawsuit against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency challenging the use of chlorpyrifos, a widely used pesticide, on food crops.

The case was filed Aug. 7 in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals by the state attorneys general of New York, California, Washington, Massachusetts, Maryland and Vermont, arguing chlorpyrifos is a toxic chemical that can harm infant and child neurological development.

Environmental groups including the Pesticide Action Network North America and Natural Resources Defense Council originally petitioned the EPA to ban chlorpyrifos in 2007. Former EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt denied the petition in 2017.

A dozen groups fought the decision to the appeals court, which ordered the EPA to reconsider prohibiting the insecticide. The agency, now led by Andrew Wheeler, upheld its decision in July, allowing farmers to continue using chlorpyrifos.

Rosenblum said it is “really alarming that the Trump administration is disregarding the law by allowing a toxic pesticide that is dangerous to young children and infants to be used in our national food stream.”

“Every one of us eats food that comes from around the country, so until the EPA can show this pesticide is safe, there should be a national ban,” Rosenblum said. “Farmworkers, their families and children living nearby are the people to bear the disproportional brunt of this toxin.”

As of 2016, between 5 million and 7.5 million pounds of chlorpyrifos were applied to food crops annually across the country, according to the states’ lawsuit. Rosenblum said the EPA’s own scientists have twice been unable to identify a safe level for the pesticide on food.

The EPA under the Obama administration did consider a rule to ban chlorpyrifos in 2015, but Pruitt later reversed course, citing “serious scientific concerns and substantive process gaps in the proposal” in his denial. The agency plans to complete a review of the chemical by Oct. 1, 2022.

Chlorpyrifos was patented in 1966, and remains one of the most widely used pesticides in the U.S. It is registered for about 50 crops in Oregon, including seed production crops, vegetable crops, Christmas trees and nursery plants.

Earlier this year, the Oregon Legislature considered bills that would ban chlorpyrifos. House Bill 3058 and Senate Bill 853 died in committee.

Katie Fast, executive director of Oregonians for Food and Shelter, an agribusiness group that advocates safe use of pesticides and biotechnology, said chlorpyrifos is an important tool for farmers to fight pests like aphids and roundworms.

While some growers of tree fruits and specialty crops have been able to phase out chlorpyrifos, Fast said others do not have registered alternatives. Without chlorpyrifos, she said they could see significant pest damage.

“The labeling process for pesticides through the EPA is very science-based, and takes into account all environmental and human health exposure that could happen through application or food consumption,” Fast said.

Lisa Arkin, executive director of Beyond Toxics, an environmental and human health organization based in Eugene, Ore., said chlorpyrifos is shown to damage nerve cells and have long-term effects on brain development in children.



Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum

Bonneville Dam lock to reopen Sept. 30

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

The Bonneville Dam navigation lock will return to service at 10 a.m. Sept. 30, according to the Portland District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

A sill on the lock was found to be cracked, causing it to leak as barges and other vessels transited the dam. The Corps shut down the lock, blocking all river traffic.

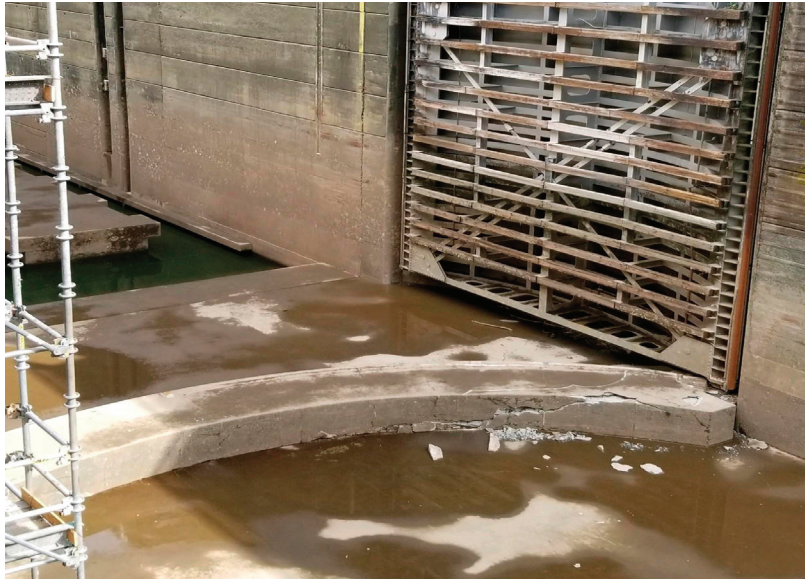
Barge and elevator operators rely on the Columbia River to transport millions of bushels of wheat to market.

“It’s important to recognize the patience from our Columbia River users, who depend on this critical piece of infrastructure to run their businesses,” said Col. Aaron Dorf, Portland District commander for the Corps. “Between now and Sept. 30, our teams will be working around-the-clock to construct the new sill to restore Columbia River traffic.”

“One nice thing is we’re 95% done harvesting, so I think we’ve all put the crop away,” said Damon Filan, manager of Tri-Cities Grain and a member of the Washington Grain Commission.

Fourteen commercial vessels are impacted by the lock closure, according to the U.S. Coast Guard’s Columbia River Waterways Management Division — seven from Tidewater Barge, four from Shaver Transportation and three from American Cruise Line.

Shaver Transportation operates a fleet of 20 grain barges between Lewiston, Idaho, and export terminals on



Megan Innes/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

This Sept. 8 photo provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers shows a crack in a concrete sill on a lock on the Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River. The critical lock has been shut down for repairs, meaning barges that shuttle millions of tons of wheat, wood and other goods to the Pacific Ocean for transport to Asia can’t move.

the lower Columbia River.

“This, of course, is a busy time of year post-harvest,” Rob Rich, vice president of marine services at Shaver, said.

Three Shaver barge tows are above Bonneville Dam 40 miles upstream from Portland and waiting to go through the locks. Ten barges are loaded. They are tied off at the Fort Raines barge storage area above Bonneville Dam, awaiting transit through the locks when they reopen, Rich said.

“All that wheat is going to move” despite the delay, Rich said.

The barges are closed-hatch and

weather is moderate, so Rich doesn’t expect the delay to harm the grain.

“It is not uncommon for wheat to be in barges three or four weeks or more,” he said. “There isn’t a concern about quality degradation.”

Wheat exports have been relatively slow due to trade wars and global competition, Filan said.

Overseas customers tend to purchase wheat several months out, he said.

“If it was a very long-term deal, then we’d have some challenges, because I’m not sure the rail could handle the demand,” he said.

Southeast Washington wolfpack crosses threshold

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

The Grouse Flats wolfpack killed a calf in Garfield County, Washington Fish and Wildlife said Monday, becoming the first pack in southeast Washington to attack enough livestock to be a candidate for lethal removal.

A range-rider found the dead 450-pound calf in a fenced pasture on private land Aug. 30. The pack killed two calves in July and killed or injured three cattle last year.

Fish and Wildlife’s policy calls for it to consider lethal control after four attacks on livestock in

10 months. The most recent depredation was the fourth in 10 months and two days, but the department will count it, a spokeswoman said.

Fish and Wildlife Director Kelly Susewind has not decided what the department will do, she said. The department retains flexibility in choosing to use lethal control, ramp-up non-lethal measures or hope wolves and livestock move apart.

The department has shot wolves in northeast Washington to protect cattle and sheep, but has never used lethal control in southeast Washington.

The department’s use of lethal

control in places with many more attacks on cattle has been challenged, sometimes successfully, in Western Washington courts in counties without wolves.

The Grouse Flats pack’s territory extends into northeast Oregon. The pack had eight wolves at the end of 2018, according to Fish and Wildlife, making it the second-largest of Washington’s 27 packs.

The rear half of the calf found Aug. 30 had been mostly eaten, according to Fish and Wildlife.

Investigators found wolf tracks. A radio collar worn by one wolf showed that at least one member of

the pack had been in the area, the department said.

The rancher watches the herd with range-riders five days a week, has people regularly in the area, puts lights in the pasture and disposes of livestock carcasses, according to the department.

The department also will consider lethal removal after three attacks in 30 days. The Grouse Flats pack has not crossed that threshold.

Fish and Wildlife confirmed July 8 and July 22 that the pack attacked calves. One calf was attacked on private land. The other was on a grazing allotment in the state 4-0 Ranch Wildlife Area.

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