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HEMP RUSH

Plenty of risk, reward possible in growing newest cash crop



By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

When Paul McGill first considered growing hemp earlier this year, he was intrigued by the enormous potential payoff.

McGill and his wife, Dianne, moved from Portland to Salem in 2014 to buy True North Orchards, with 3 acres of U-pick fruit including apples, pears and plums. The couple immediately took to the lifestyle, though they continued to work off-farm jobs to make ends meet.

Seeing an opportunity to boost their bottom line, McGill planted a half-acre of hemp in early July. Harvest began Oct. 5, which he figures will take about a month to finish, cutting it by hand.

"Thus far, we've been very pleased with the results," McGill said.

The McGills are among nearly 2,000 farmers taking part in a hemp-propelled gold rush across Oregon, where experts predict the newly legal crop could generate a \$1 billion farm gate value this year. That would make it the state's most valuable agricultural commodity — ahead of the powerhouse nursery, hay and cattle industries.

Since hemp was legalized in the 2018 Farm Bill, the floodgates have opened for farms large and small to capitalize on the booming new industry. Oregon now has more acreage in hemp than the acreage devoted to potatoes and onions combined. Only Colorado, with 86,234 acres, grows more

hemp in the U.S.

Like most farmers, McGill is growing hemp for

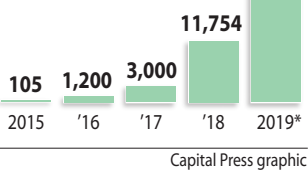
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George Plaver/Capital Press

Several hundred field workers pick hemp flowers on a late September morning at Hemptown USA's Oregon farm in Central Point.

Registered hemp acres in Oregon

Source: Oregon Department of Agriculture
*As of Oct. 7

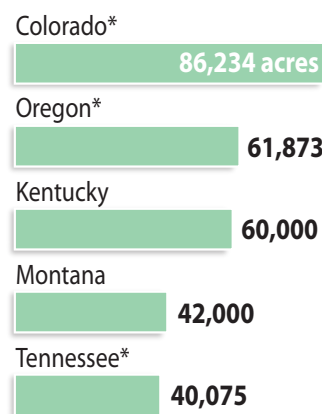


Up 436% from 2018

Capital Press graphic

Top hemp states by acres cultivated

(As of Sept. 2019)



*Includes greenhouse cultivation
Source: New Leaf Data Services

Capital Press graphic



George Plaver/Capital Press

A worker prunes dried hemp buds by hand at Hemptown USA.

Oregon's Yamhill County must reconsider rails-to-trails project

Project wasn't properly analyzed for farm impacts, ruling says

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

A controversial rails-to-trails project in Oregon's Yamhill County must be reconsidered due to potential farm impacts from pesticide restrictions, increased trespassing and food safety problems.

Oregon's Land Use Board of Appeals has blocked the county government's approval of the nearly 3-mile Yamhelas Westsider project and ordered it to take a closer look at these possible effects, as well as other land use issues.

Under Oregon land use law, developments in exclu-

sive farm zones that require a conditional use permit cannot force significant changes to agricultural practices or significantly raise their costs.

Farmers who oppose converting the railroad track between the cities of Yamhill and Carlton into a recreational trail argue that it will

complicate pesticide applications due to required "setbacks" from such sensitive areas.

Common pesticides such as Gramoxone cannot be sprayed within the "vicinity" of recreational areas, while Lorsban and Yuma 4E require a 100-foot setback, which farmers claim will reduce their ability to treat fields next to the trail.

According to LUBA,

Yamhill County didn't adequately evaluate the project's potential effects on pesticides under the "farm impacts test" because such setbacks are required even when the chemicals are used properly to avoid drift or over-spray.

Pesticide regulations also prohibit spraying within recreational areas, which may be broader than just the paved trail used by visitors,

the ruling said. In analyzing the project, the county must take a closer look at what's mandated under pesticide labels.

"In doing so, the county will likely have to make specific factual findings about specific setbacks required by particular chemicals on particular farming operations on surrounding farmlands,

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Washington shapes wildlife policies outside public act meetings

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

Four subcommittee meetings will precede the next Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting, as members increasingly talk about hot-button topics such as wolves and cougars in undocumented sessions.

The department announces the meetings and generally lets the public attend. It reserves the right to close them, however. The public meetings law doesn't apply because only four of nine commissioners attend, according to the

attorney general's office.

Former Fish and Wildlife commissioner Jay Holzmilller, who was on the commission until July, said he favored setting up the subcommittees and sometimes closing them to the public.

"There have to be times you absolutely have to have those candid conversations," Holzmilller said. "Yes, no deci-



Washington State Capitol

sions were made, but what we came back with to the commission generally was what got done."

The commission didn't have any subcommittee meetings in 2017. The fish committee started meeting in early 2018. The commission has added the wolf, wildlife, habitat, "big tent" and executive committees. The commission's chairman, Larry

Carpenter, closed the only meeting of the executive committee.

The wolf committee has met six times this year. Its seventh meeting, set for Oct. 17, was scheduled to be broadcast by TVW, Washington's public affairs network, but programmers canceled that day. A TVW official said the network wanted to broadcast the meeting because of the public's interest in wolves, but another event came up and left the network without the resources to cover it.

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