



Harold Hutchinson
The Port Westward Industrial Park is at the center of a controversy involving local farmers.

DEVELOPING DISPUTE

NW Oregon port, farmers at odds over industrial expansion

By **GEORGE PAVEN**
Capital Press

CLATSKANIE, Ore. — A beaver scurried into a nearby slough as Jim Hoffmann drove his growling UTV past rows of organic blueberries at Hopville Farms.

Hoffmann bought the property as an investment 10 years ago in Clatskanie, Ore., about 60 miles northwest of Portland along the Columbia River. What he found was an impeccable area for growing blueberries, with its cool climate, clean water and soils rich in organic matter.

“The soil, it’s like peat,” Hoffmann said. “Because of that, it lends itself to organic growing.”

Hopville Farms finished its three-year organic certification regimen in 2020, and will begin selling certified organic blueberries in 2021.

But Hoffmann said his farm would face

irreparable harm caused by a proposed expansion at the neighboring Port Westward industrial park, which is seeking to rezone 837 acres of high-value farmland for rural industrial development. The case illustrates a common scenario playing out in many parts of the West as development moves onto agricultural land.

Columbia County commissioners have already approved the rezone request twice since 2014, only for the decision to be appealed and remanded both times by the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals, or LUBA.

Now, just one question remains: can a new industrial tenant be compatible with local agriculture, fish and wildlife?

The Port of Columbia County, which owns

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Clatskanie, Ore.



Capital Press graphic



George Paven/Capital Press

Jim Hoffmann, left, owner of Hopville Farms in Clatskanie, Ore., with his oldest son, Gus, in front of a block of organic blueberries.

ODA pulls back state hemp plan as Congress extends deadline for new rules

By **GEORGE PAVEN**
Capital Press

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Agriculture has withdrawn the updated state hemp plan it submitted to USDA in August after Congress voted to delay implementation of new production rules through Sept. 30, 2021.

That means ODA will continue regulating hemp

growers under the current pilot program established in the 2014 Farm Bill for at least another year.

Sunny Summers, Oregon’s cannabis policy coordinator, said the move allows extra time to ensure compliance with USDA requirements.

“All in all, I think it benefits the industry to wait and see if we can smooth out some of those bumps along the road,” Summers said.

USDA issued its interim final rule for hemp production on Oct. 31, 2019, giving states one year to submit plans for approval before the law went into effect. But Summers said they were struggling to meet the original deadline.

For example, hemp growers applying for a license cannot have any felony convictions on their records, though ODA does not have the statutory authority to conduct background checks.



Capital Press File

Hemp grows in an Oregon field.

Bills to fix the situation in the state Legislature failed after the last two sessions ended in Republican walkouts.

“We decided to pull back our planned submission from USDA and wait,” Summers said. “We just wanted to take advantage of that opportunity.”

Hemp industry members were also concerned about the deadline, primarily

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Shoppers are buying more poinsettias this December

By **SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN**
Capital Press

Poinsettias and other decorative holiday plants are selling well this year at nurseries across the West.

Growers in California, Washington and Oregon told the Capital Press that while sales of poinsettias for events, churches and fundraisers have slumped, many growers are experiencing record retail sales. Marketers say it appears shoppers are decorating early this year and brightening their homes for a COVID-19 Christmas.

“Definitely more people are buying poinsettias this year. Our retail sales are actually up about 33%,” said Mark Bigej, CEO of AI’s Garden & Home, a multi-generation nursery with operations in Woodburn, Sherwood, Gresham



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press File

Although poinsettia sales to fundraisers and events are down this year, growers say they are experiencing strong retail sales as shoppers look to decorate their homes during the holidays.

and Wilsonville, Ore.

In California, the nation’s top poinsettia-producing state, some large retail growers say their sales are up 100% or more from last year. According to the California Farm Bureau Federation, growers across the state are seeing poinset-

tias sell more “briskly” this year.

In 2019, USDA estimated Americans bought around \$34 million in potted poinsettias. Experts say it’s harder to predict this year’s totals because while

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