

Washington Senate passes two climate bills

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Senate Democrats passed cap-and-trade and low-carbon fuels bills Thursday evening, moving to reduce global greenhouse emissions by 0.1% by 2030.

Republicans said the twin bills will drive up gasoline prices and electric rates, but will have no effect on the climate. The poor and businesses that can't simply pass along the costs will suffer, Republicans said.

"I think the high cost is going to hit the low-income people and our agriculture people harder than anyone else," said Sen. Judy Warnick, the top-ranking Republican on the Senate agriculture committee.

The cap-and-trade legislation, Senate Bill 5126, now goes to the House for consideration. The low-carbon fuel legislation, House Bill 1091, passed the House, but the Senate made changes that must be reconciled with the House.

The cap-and-trade bill would require large carbon emitters to gradually reduce emissions or bid for emission permits. The auctions would raise about \$500 million a year for the state, according to projections, hauling in money for transportation and environmental justice.

The low-carbon fuel bill requires more biofuels in on-road gasoline

and diesel. The financial beneficiaries would be renewable fuel producers, not the state. Republicans ripped the bill as "a gas tax without roads."

Farm groups oppose both bills because they exert an upward push on energy costs.

Ecology says many factors affect gas prices and that it hasn't been proven that blending in biofuels raises pump prices. California and Oregon, which have low-carbon fuel standards, report that the polices do increase prices.

"There will be a large fuel tax, whether it's 10 cents, 20 cents, 57 cents — that's the truth," said Sen. Mark Schoesler, R-Ritzville.

Republican Sen. Perry Dozier, an Eastern Washington farmer, said that because everything in agriculture depends on fuel, farmers will be hurt by cap-and-trade and low-carbon fuels.

"This is going to be the poison pill for agriculture — these two bills," he said.

The bills would give the Department of Ecology authority to implement the two programs.

The businesses covered by cap-and-trade emit 56.5 million metric tons of carbon a year. The goal would be to reduce that by 36.4 million metric tons by 2030.

Ecology estimates the low-carbon fuel bill would reduce emissions by 1.8 million metric tons by 2030. That's

about half the greenhouse gases Ecology attributes to manure, fertilizer and livestock burps.

The Paris-based International Energy Agency estimated global emissions in 2019 at 33.1 billion metric tons. Ecology estimates Washington's emissions at 99.57 million metric tons, or 0.3% of global emissions.

Democrats argued low-carbon fuels will clean up the air. Ecology is unable to say by how much.

The cap-and-trade bill passed by just one vote, 25-24. Climate activists attack the bill as loophole riddled. Sen. T'wina Nobles, D-University Place, voted for the bill, but said she hoped the House will set harder emission caps.

The low-carbon fuel bill, which passed 27-20, was amended to require at least 25% of the state's biofuels come from agricultural products. The rule could be challenged as an unconstitutional barrier to interstate commerce.

Schoesler, an Eastern Washington farmer, called the amendment a "silly joke."

He said it wasn't feasible for farmers to grow crops such as canola, corn and camelina for biofuels.

"If you've ever grown those crops and understand marketing, you just wouldn't be promoting those ideas as a reason to pass a gas tax without roads," he said.



WDFW

A wolf passes a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife trail camera. The department's administrator says he needs to make quicker determinations of whether to eliminate problem wolves.

WDFW head sees need for quicker call on wolf removal

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press



Kelly Susewind

It's more on me than on staff. I'm willing to put a timeline on that as well," he said.

Washington Fish and Wildlife Director Kelly Susewind said April 7 the department will try to decide more quickly whether to kill wolves once packs have met thresholds for lethal control.

As in the past, Fish and Wildlife will remove wolves as a last resort, Susewind told the department's Wolf Advisory Group. Delays making the decision, however, "limit the value" of lethal control, he said.

"When I say we'll put a deadline on our decision-making, that doesn't mean we jump to lethal. But that means we make the decision and get the action underway as soon as we can," Susewind said.

Fish and Wildlife protocol calls for the department to consider removing wolves after three attacks on livestock in 30 days or four in 10 months. The department says it's a case-by-case call by Susewind.

Last year, the Wedge pack in northeast Washington crossed the threshold on May 19. The department killed one wolf on July 27. When attacks on livestock continued, the department killed the pack's last two wolves.

Susewind said that he recently met separately with wolf advocates and ranchers. He said he agreed with ranchers who said the department should shorten the time between depredations and deciding whether to kill wolves.

Fish and Wildlife conflict managers send a recommendation to Susewind on whether to use lethal control. He said his decision has "been the slower part of the process."

"It's been on my desk.

Stevens County Cattlemen's Association President Scott Nielsen told the Capital Press that "huge delays" have let packs become habituated to cattle, forcing the department to kill more wolves to stop the problem.

"I really believe if they were quicker to act, they wouldn't have to kill as many wolves," he said. "Absolutely, there's been a delay. It's been something we've been appealing to Kelly to look at."

Even if Susewind opts against lethal control, the rancher is better off knowing sooner, Nielsen said. "We need to know what they're doing."

Susewind said wolf advocates want the department to ensure ranchers are trying to prevent attacks.

"I told the group that is, in fact, my intention. We're expecting people to step up to the bar. If they're not stepping up to the bar, that certainly influences the decision-making," he said.

Wolf advocates were concerned the department was too quick to kill wolves, Susewind said. "I don't think we've ever done that. I think we've always hit those thresholds and deliberately considered whether lethal removal is the right tool, or not," he said.

Sugar beet planting progresses across Idaho

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

With just two sugar beet planting seasons under his belt, Miguel Villafana has already decided he likes to err on the late side.

"I choose to wait a little bit, just to be closer to water," he said. His local irrigation district will soon start deliveries.

Villafana, who farms in the Wilder-Homedale area of southwest Idaho, started planting sugar beets April 1, some three weeks later than he could have.

He aimed to give the plants the best chance to emerge in soft, moist soil with minimal exposure to wind and other elements.

"Conditions have been drier than I'd like to see," Villafana said.

Sugar beet planting is well underway among most of the 700-plus growers in the cooperative that owns Amalgamated Sugar and its factories. They will plant about 180,000 acres, similar to the 2020 total.



Idaho Sugarbeet Growers Association

Kody Youree plants sugar beets in the Twin Falls, Idaho, area.

"Planting has been interrupted, sporadically, by rain, snow and wind events — typical for spring in the Pacific Northwest," said Jessica Anderson of Boise-based Amalgamated. "It's a pretty normal year as far as planting is concerned."

As of April 5, Amalgamated growers had planted about 45,000 acres, she said.

By April 7, planting was 70% complete in the Treasure Valley. Some fields in the Nampa, Idaho, area had to be replanted due to wind and frost.

Sugar beet planting typically starts in early to mid-March in the Treasure Valley and later to the east in south-central and southeastern Idaho. Some growers are yet to start planting.

"Depending on the weather, we expect a sharp increase in planted acres in the Magic Valley and Upper Snake growing regions over the next two weeks," Anderson said April 7.

Randy Grant farms in the Eden-Hazelton area of south-central Idaho. He

said planting conditions have been good and progress around average for the region. He often plants beets early — he started March 18 and finished April 3 — so he can shift to planting potatoes.

Twin Falls area farmer Kody Youree also finished planting sugar beets in early April.

He said soil prepared in the spring had moisture 4 to 5 inches deep compared to about an inch where crews last fall bedded and fertilized.

Groups push for FDA oversight of GE animals

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press



Stephen Hahn

Thirteen groups led by the Center for Food Safety are urging the Food and Drug Administration to retain regulatory authority over genetically engineered food animals.

In January, the Trump administration proposed that the FDA, USDA and the U.S. Health and Human Services Department sign a memorandum of understanding. Under it, USDA would have provided end-to-end oversight, from pre-market reviews through post-market food safety monitoring for farm animals modified or developed using genetic engineering that are intended for human food.

However, FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn refused to sign the MOU, saying he didn't support it and intended to disregard it.

"FDA remains undeterred in our steadfast commitment to ensure that animal agriculture biotechnology products undergo independent and science- and risk-based evaluations by our career experts," Hahn said in a Twitter post in January.

Alex Azar, then the Health and Human Services Secretary, "was and remains supportive of Commissioner Hahn's and FDA's position on the MOU," a spokesperson for HHS told the Capital Press at the time.

The letter from the groups urging FDA oversight said the Politico web-

site reported Hahn's refusal to sign the MOU "amid concerns about its legality and the potential health repercussions of relaxing oversight of certain genetically altered products."

"We share Commissioner Hahn's concerns and urge you to instruct USDA officials to remove the MOU from the APHIS (USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) website as the MOU is invalid," the groups said in the letter.

In announcing the MOU, former USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, repeated animal and meat industry arguments that FDA's safety-oriented regulatory approach impedes rapid commercialization of GE animals.

The animal agriculture industry has demanded reg-

ulatory certainty to expedite investment in and commercialization of GE animals, the groups said.

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LEGAL NOTICE OF FINE FESCUE COMMISSION BUDGET HEARING

TO: ALL OREGON FINE FESCUE GROWERS
Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held pursuant to ORS 576.416 (5), on Monday, May 10, 2021, at 7:00 a.m., via Zoom, upon a proposed budget for operation of the Fine Fescue Commission during the fiscal year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. At this hearing any producer of Oregon-grown Fine Fescue or Highland Bentgrass seed has a right to be heard with respect to the proposed budget, a copy of which is available for public inspection, under reasonable circumstances, in the office of each County Extension Agent in Oregon. For further information, contact the Fine Fescue Commission business office, P.O. Box 3366, Salem, Oregon 97302, telephone 503-364-2944. The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. Please make any requests for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodation for persons with disabilities at least 48 hours before the meeting by contacting the Commission office at 503-364-2944. 5239872-1

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