

Farming, hunting groups band together

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

SALEM — Signature gathering is underway for a controversial ballot measure in Oregon that, if passed by voters, would remove most exemptions for farming, ranching and hunting under the state's animal abuse laws.

The Oregon Elections Division released a draft ballot title for Initiative Petition 13 on May 20 after verifying 1,085 sponsorship signatures. Petitioners now have until July 8 to collect 112,020 signatures required to place the initiative on the November 2022 ballot.

A coalition of 19 agriculture and outdoor sports groups, meanwhile, has banded together to oppose the measure.

"I have never seen an initiative that would have such an immediate and devastating impact on more Oregon families than IP13," said Mary Anne Cooper, vice president of public policy for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

IP13, titled the Abuse, Neglect, and Assault Exemption Modification and Improvement Act, was filed Nov. 2, 2020 with the Oregon Secretary of State's office. The chief petitioner is David Michelson, a Portland animal rights activist.

Under Oregon law, a person commits animal abuse if they "intentionally, knowingly or recklessly cause physical injury to an animal," or "cruelly cause the death of an animal."

Baked into the law, however, is an exemption for "good animal husbandry" — things like branding and dehorning cattle that are common on ranches.

Not only would IP13 erase that exemption, but it would classify breeding livestock as sexual abuse of an animal, a Class C felony. The measure would also strip away protections for hunting, fishing, rodeos, slaughtering livestock, wildlife management, pest control, scientific research and more.

According to the Yes on IP13 campaign website, the measure doesn't change the definition of abuse — rather it modifies existing laws to hold everyone to the same ethical standard.

But opponents say the result would effectively turn farmers, ranchers, sportsmen and even teachers into criminals.

"Everyone from horse trainers to pet groomers to dairy farmers to anyone who kills a rat in their own home would become criminals under this measure," Cooper said.

A dozen agricultural groups submitted comments on June 4 to Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum asking for amendments to the ballot's draft language that more clearly communicates the effects of the measure.

The groups include the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, Northwest Chicken Council, Oregon Sheep Growers Association, Oregonians for Food and Shelter, Food Northwest, Livestock Marketing Association, Fur Commission USA, Oregon Horse Council, West Coast Seafood Processors Association and Friends of Family Farmers.

As written, they claim the draft ballot is under-inclusive and misleading, and does not accurately summarize all of IP13's major effects.

"Oregon law prohibits killing or injuring animals but acknowledges that there are many necessary exceptions to protect the food supply, and rudimentary, widely accepted animal management and care practices, none of which Oregonians would likely expect should or would be criminalized," the letter states.

Protesters threaten to breach Klamath headgates

By **HOLLY DILLEMUTH**
For the Capital Press

Rising tensions in the Klamath Basin could soon come to a boil, as two Klamath Project irrigators announced last week that they plan to lead the breach of the headgates of the federal irrigation project's main canal and try to release water, likely triggering a standoff with the federal government.

Klamath Project irrigators Grant Knoll and Dan Nielsen bought property next to the headgates in April for \$30,000 and have set up camp on the site. They are staffing a red-and-white canvas tent with volunteers from the local branch of People's Rights, a national organization formed in 2020 by property rights activist Ammon Bundy, and they're trying to rally support.

Both met in 2001 during a similarly extreme drought, and were among those who forcibly turned on the water to the A Canal at the headgates.

They say they're planning to do it again, but just need bigger equipment this time around.

"I'm planning on getting D.C.'s attention," Knoll said following a Memorial Day barbecue held at the tent. "We're going to turn on the water and have a standoff."

Federal officials announced in mid-May that, due to extremely low water elevations in Upper Klamath Lake, that no water would be released this season from the lake into the A Canal, the main channel that delivers irrigation water to the Project.



Holly Dillemoth/For the Capital Press

Grant Knoll, left, and Dan Nielsen. The two Klamath Project irrigators say they will breach the project's headgates in an attempt to get water into the system's main canal.

Knoll and Nielsen say they plan to enter the fenced area surrounding the headgates, which is topped with barbed wire and posted with keep-out signs threatening criminal charges.

The large tent where they've been rallying supporters and hosting speakers, along Nevada Street, has served as a "water crisis info center" for the past two weeks.

Nielsen and Knoll were frank in discussing their plans with Jefferson Public Radio. They said they were both prepared to do what it takes to get access to water they believe belongs to them.

"If you stand up for your private property, it appears that you're putting your life on the line, 'cause they will shoot you down and gun you down like they did LaVoy Finnicum," Nielsen said.

Finnicum was a prominent participant in the armed takeover and occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Harney County, Ore., in 2016. Oregon State Police killed Finnicum after he tried to run an FBI roadblock during an attempted arrest.

Nielsen says when he and the others break into the headgates, "(We're) not going to be armed but they're probably going to be people on the outside protecting us, and if it's not our sheriff, we'll have people protect us."

Ammon Bundy, leader of the 2016 Malheur occupation, has stated he's willing to come to Klamath Falls to join those involved in the effort, if asked to do so.

Nielsen is quick to showcase

a text conversation he has with Bundy, and Nielsen says Bundy will get the heads-up when they make their move. Knoll and Nielsen won't say when that will be, but they are saying it'll be on short notice.

Knoll had told a pool of reporters at a rally that having Klamath Irrigation District turn on the water would be the ideal approach. Knoll is a board member of the district and said he has swayed one of his fellow board members to vote to let the water flow.

"It would be much better for the community for KID to do it than for civil disobedience," Knoll said.

But the odds of the KID board taking that approach appear to be slim.

The federal government owns the land underneath and surrounding the headgates, says Gene Souza, who manages the Klamath Irrigation District. The district has a contract with the federal Bureau of Reclamation to operate and maintain the facility.

Souza could sense things were going to get bad for water delivery this year starting last fall. In February and March this year, inflows into Upper Klamath Lake were the lowest since 1933. He says he understands the frustration that's driving Knoll and Nielsen's efforts.

But, Souza says he doesn't support any effort to breach the fence surrounding the headgates to access the water.

"The sad part about it is, their actions, physical actions ... would not result in a single drop of water being delivered to their farm."

OSU to build new \$20 million dairy processing facility

By **SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN**
Capital Press

CORVALLIS, Ore. — Oregon State University announced Tuesday it will build a new \$20 million dairy processing facility using private investments, state bonds and university funding.

The new, 3,000-square-foot dairy plant — three times the size of OSU's existing facilities — will be used as a research laboratory and hands-on classroom for students and faculty, an educational space for the community, an incubator for dairy startups, a space where creameries statewide can test new products and a retail shop selling products such as ice cream made on site.

"I'm thrilled. It's truly a dream come true," said Lisbeth Goddik, head of OSU's Department of Food Science and Technology. "We've wanted to provide the very best educational opportunities for our students, and this will allow us to do that. I think it'll also have a really broad impact on our industry, because it'll make it faster and cheaper to develop new products."

This year is devoted to planning and design. Construction will likely begin summer 2022 and take about a year.

The facility will be in OSU's Withycombe Hall, which originally housed a dairy in 1952. Robin Frojen, OSU's current creamery manager, said she's excited to restore the building "back to its creamery glory."

More than a dozen outside groups invested in the renovation. The three lead outside donors were Tillamook County Creamery Association, Northwest Farm Credit Services and the Oregon Dairy Nutrition Council.

Alan Sams, dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences, said about \$3 million comes from private donations, \$3 million from state bonds and the remainder from university funds. Additional fundraising is underway.



Oregon State University

Oregon State University students making cheese. The upcoming \$20 million facility will provide opportunities for students, Oregon's dairy industry and the broader community.

Goddik, the department head, said industry groups donated for a few reasons: to invest in the next generation of the dairy industry, to support research and to have a facility they could access for testing and product development.

Goddik said small creameries often lack the equipment needed for product testing, while large creameries usually have equipment that's too big for batch tests — so the scale of OSU's new facility will be ideal to serve both groups.

OSU's existing facility is only set up for artisanal cheesemaking — a brand line called Beaver Classic. In the new facility, students will be able to produce more cheese varieties, yogurt, ice cream and other products.

Frojen, the creamery manager, said she looks forward to making blue cheese with her students, which isn't possible in the current facility.

"We'll be able to expand into other products," said Sams, the dean. "(The plant) will also allow us to teach more technologically advanced and industry-relevant things to the students to keep pace with the industry so they're ready to step into jobs when they graduate."

Severe drought spreads in Washington

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

Drought conditions have spread in Washington, the U.S. Drought Monitor reported Thursday, with one-third of the state suffering "severe drought" and forecasts predicting that a hot, early summer will follow the extraordinarily dry spring.

Drought covered 68% of the state, up from 53% the week before. The percentage of the state in a "severe drought" increased to 33% from 24%.

Portions of Benton, Columbia, Klickitat, Walla Walla and Yakima counties, making up 4% of the state, were in "extreme drought," the second worst of four drought categories.

The U.S. Climate Prediction Center forecasts that Washington, along with the entire West, will be hotter and drier than normal between June 12 and 25.

"We could see some serious drought conditions develop by the summer," Washington State Assistant Climatologist Karin Bumbaco said.

Compared to Oregon, California and the Southwest, Washington's drought conditions are still mild, but the dry spring has pushed the state to look more like the rest of the West.

Temperatures have been moderate. April, however, was the seventh driest April in the past 127 years, and it followed the 11th driest March.

Combined, the two months were the fourth-driest March through April on record,

according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Statewide May figures have not been released.

Washington's snowpack was the best in nearly a decade. The spring, however, has been drier than in 2015, the year of the state's "snowpack drought."

"It goes to show that you can have a dry spring regardless of what happened in the winter," Bumbaco said. "The drought conditions are all the result of the dry spring."

Snow continues to melt in streams and rivers. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation on Thursday affirmed that senior and junior water-right holders can expect to get their full allotments in the Yakima Valley.

"Despite the third month with dry conditions, the snow and reservoir storage still appear adequate to meet normal demands," Yakima Project River Operations supervisor Chuck Garner said in a statement.

The Northwest River Forecast Council on Thursday predicted Columbia River flows at The Dalles though September will be 84% of normal.

In northwest Washington, the Skagit River near Mount Vernon has projected flows of 101% of normal, while the Dungeness River on the Olympic Peninsula has projected flows of 107% of normal.

Farther south, however, snowpacks have melted. Fed by snow but mostly reliant on rain, the Walla Walla River near Touchet in southeast Washington has projected flows of only 53% of normal.

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