

Salem Update: Dealing with Poaching



By Representative
Brad Witt

As the Chair of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, I am always interested in finding out what is going on in the other forty-nine states, what problems they have and what successes they have experienced when it comes to dealing with rural issues. Recently, I attended the State Agriculture and Rural Leaders (SARL) Summit in Denver, Colorado, an organization expressly designed to provide all fifty states and some Canadian Provinces with the opportunity to share experiences and troubleshoot ideas.

The SARL was formed in 2002, and it is managed by an elected board of nine, and I'm proud to say that I was elected as a director at our most recent meeting based upon a proposed agenda that addresses many of the members' mutual concerns. They are as follows:

1. The necessity for long term water storage, particularly in these times of lengthy drought.
2. Comprehensive predator management policies.
3. Sustainable approaches to habitat protection/enhancement that place environmental, social, and economic considerations on equal footing.
4. The provision of sound science and messaging about key issues important to the Ag community and rural America.

SARL's mission is to promote and foster cooperation, leadership and educational opportunities among state and provincial legislators. I look forward to a mutually enriching involvement with my fellow elected officials and I hope to bring the products of experience and innovation back to Oregon.

February 11th marked an important deadline in our session timeline as it is the date that most bills were required to move out of their assigned policy committees. Some move on to either Revenue, Ways and Means or Rules for further consideration, but many head directly to the House or Senate floor for a vote, and then the bills move to the other chamber for another round of hearings. The level of activity to accomplish this has been furious over the last two weeks since our time here is limited. In my own Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, I'm

happy to say that we completed our agenda of House bills and we now await the influx from the Senate.

One of the bills passed out of committee, I believe, will hold special interest for District 31. HB 4046, deals with increased damages for the unlawful taking or killing of wildlife (poaching). Hunting and fishing are part of the fabric of most rural communities and we are no exception, however we have to acknowledge that there are at times a few bad actors that spoil it for everyone. We have read, all too often, about persons who kill black bears for their paws and/or organs, take sturgeon for their eggs, kill elk or deer for their antlers, and leave the animals and fish to waste. It is the antithesis of everything that we consider to be humane and sportsmanlike.

Activities that are considered poaching include killing an animal out of season, without a license, with a prohibited weapon, or in a prohibited manner. Killing a protected species, exceeding one's bag limit or killing an animal while trespassing may also be considered poaching. HB 4046 increases penalties significantly for the unlawful taking or killing of certain wildlife and it prohibits the removal or utilization of certain animal parts. It also adds the gray wolf, black bear, cougar, and sage grouse to the list of animals for which penalties may be assessed. The vast majority of hunters and fishers would never consider wasting their catch...this bill is for those who won't play by the rules.

My Ag Committee held informational hearings last week on another little poacher called the Asian gypsy moth, which is set to do major harm to some parts of District 31. The Oregon Department of Agriculture has discovered 6 Asian gypsy moths in the Forest Park area near Linnton. This invasive species is a devastating defoliator that feeds on a long list of deciduous and coniferous trees. In the last 30 years, the Asian gypsy moth has been detected in Oregon three times and successfully eradicated each time. This latest infestation in Portland is likely linked to a Russian cargo vessel carrying steel plates.

Although the population of insects is still small at this time, each female can lay up to 300 eggs so the Department

is embarking on an aggressive three-pronged approach that involves minimizing the risk of continued introduction, increasing surveillance of high-risk areas, and treatment of infected areas. Although the Department has held informational hearings and sent letters to area residents, if you have any questions about the process please feel free to contact my office for more information.

On another topic, Mark McMullen, the state economist, presented legislators with the revenue forecast for the state, projected through June of 2017. In a nut shell, our state is still showing strong growth, in fact the best in the nation, but McMullen warns us that stock market volatility may affect both corporate and personal income tax revenues going forward and that his office is being very cautious about future revenue. Our reserves are also strong, with \$800 million in the bank, but it would not be enough to carry us through another recession. Both the Governor's Office and our Legislative Revenue Office will continue to monitor the economic landscape closely for any signs of impending recession.

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Publisher and Managing Editor
Scott Laird
503-367-0098
scott@vernoniasvoice.com

Contributors

- Chip Bubl
- Katie Cook
- Tobie Finzel
- Karen Kain
- Karen Miller
- Shannon Romtvedt
- Robert Schattschneider
- Fire Chief Dean Smith
- Sonia Spackman
- Grant Williams
- Representative Brad Witt

Photography

- Jessika Goodman
- Karen Kain
- Scott Laird

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Vernonia's Voice, LLC
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503-367-0098



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February 25, 2016
7-9 pm

Banks Log Cabin
13480 NW Main St
Banks, OR 97106

Space is limited please RSVP to
Terra Kemper, Park Ranger
503-324-0606 x223

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Upper Nehalem Watershed Council Meeting

6:30 pm on Thursday
February 25, 2016

at the UNWC office
1201 Texas Ave. Suite A
Entrance is around the back
of the School District building

For more
info call
(503) 429-0869
or email
maggie@nehalem.org

