

Big earners cost state more in tax evasion

The people who make the most money in Oregon, more than \$20,000 a year, may be costing the state treasury the most in tax evasion practices.

"About two-thirds of the \$40 million state loss from tax cheating each year comes from the ranks of those who earn more than \$20,000 a year," explained Helen M. Lowry, leader of a study sponsored by Oregon State University.

The study involved confidential interviews with more than 800 scientifically selected taxpayers.

The group's final report showed that 26.6 percent of those interviewed admitted tax cheating of some kind. Included were failure to file, under-reporting of income, over statement of deductions or improper claims for unearned tax credits.

The state lost approximately \$40 million from 1979

tax cheaters and the federal treasury lost about \$120 million from Oregonians, according to the report.

The estimated average amount of evasion for each Oregon adult or couple increases with income level.

Those grossing less than \$5,000 a year had average tax evasions amounting to just \$5.11, while those grossing \$40,000 or more realized an average of \$216.98 from their tax cheating practices.

"Two-thirds of the leakage (state loss) occurs among the one-third of the taxpayers who are in the middle and upper income brackets," Lowry said.

Tax noncompliance is not only an evasion problem, but a collection problem. About six percent of the people who should file tax returns do not. It is estimated that these non-filers are responsible for about half of the revenue the state loses.

The war against rodents rages ruthlessly on

John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men" was a classic and it would have made an apt title for a short story about man's never-ending struggle to keep his land from being devoured by rodents.

Most rural taxpayers would like the satisfaction of knowing that the land they are paying for through the nose is somewhere under their feet. But with the heavy infestation of rodents, he can't always be sure just where his land is.

My definition of a rodent is a beady-eyed animal with no hair on his tail. Rodents come in a wide variety of shapes and range from drab gray to bluish brown in color.

A rodent's harried life is spent digging holes and having babies who, in turn, dig more holes. They have voracious appetites since they spend so much energy tunneling, running from cats and scaring the pants off unsuspecting women.

The word quickly spreads when a new food supply is discovered and in a fortnight they can undermine and consume every blooming bulb from daffodils to hyacinths.

There must be some scientific study on how much dirt an earthworm can put back into the soil in a year's time. I can see that there aren't enough working worms in my yard to keep ahead of the rodents. The mice, moles and shrews are digging out the dirt faster than the worms can make it.

The unanswered questions are 1) Just where does all

that dirt go that was in those holes, and 2) Whose side of the fence is it on?

The battle to push the varmints from the land is one of wits, cunning and determination. When neighbors get together, the topic of how to murder a mole makes



Margaret Schmale's

Bits
and pieces

fascinating after dinner conversation. Everybody thinks he has the solution. But if he had the answer to the mole problem, he wouldn't be sitting around offering it casually to his neighbor, he would commercialize it and make a fortune.

Indeed, if the truth was known, the man that brags that he has eliminated the mole from his property has in

reality only herded them temporarily next door. The neighbor, noticing an increase in mole hills, listens intently to the formula so generously offered.

Dead moles, unlike dead fish, do not float to the surface so an accurate body count is impossible. The land owner, upon seeing the hills disappear from his pasture, assumes that he has killed them and since that's what he wants to believe, he worries about it no longer.

The mole, meanwhile, steps up his digging program to evade the poisonous gas, nauseous smoke and rattling windmills only to move over to a virgin piece of land. Not one to travel far, the mole waits patiently at the opposite end of his tunnel for the smoke to clear.

When he is finally forced to withdraw from the new land, he either continues on to the next neighbor, eventually making a circle, or retraces his steps and pokes his head up next to the fizzled-out smoke bomb.

The devious neighbor surrounds his property with mole plants, windmills and concrete just to be sure that the squinty-eyed rodent doesn't invade his land. Anything is worth trying, regardless of how ridiculous it may appear.

My husband settled on pouring diesel into the mole or mouse hole, stuffing a piece of dynamite into the hole and lighting it.

If the fire didn't get them, the concussion did and if neither killed the moles, at least it gave me some raised flower beds.

Streamlining gas leases now underway

An environmental analysis is underway to streamline the handling of oil and gas leasing proposals on national forest land in Oregon and Washington.

The analysis will determine how the Forest Service will respond to the Department of Interior for reports on its proposals to issue oil and gas for lands administered by the Pacific Northwest Region.

Currently, reports on about 830 requests are being withheld pending completion of the analysis and decision on procedures. A decision will be made later this month so that the Forest Service "can process the report requests from the USDI's Bureau of Land Management so that agency can decide on whether or not to issue a lease," said R.E. Worthington, regional forester.

USDI is responsible for leasing on federal lands.

The Forest Service study will develop effective procedures to handle proposals in a timely manner and to reduce paperwork. Concerns addressed in the analysis include the time required for the Forest Service response to leasing proposals, requirements necessary to prevent or control adverse environmental impacts, conflicts with other resource uses and the President's direction for timely development of domestic energy resources.

There are no producing oil or gas wells on national forest lands in the Pacific Northwest. Historically, only about 10 percent of leases result in an on-site operation. Once a lease is issued, and prior to entry on leased lands, the lessee must submit a detailed operating plan to the U.S. Geologic Survey for approval and permit issuance.

At that time, further environmental analysis is made of the proposed operation in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

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