

news Briefs

LAWMAKERS SEEK TO TWEAK SPECIES ACT

Oregon Sen. Jason Atkinson (R-Central Point) is sponsoring a state measure to encourage federal changes to the Endangered Species Act (ESA), America's 30-year-old wildlife protection legislation. Senate Joint Memorial 5 is a statement on behalf of the 73rd Legislative Assembly of Oregon urging Congress to "update" the ESA to de-emphasize critical habitat designations and give private landowners a more active role in recovery efforts.

The memorial implies support of U.S. Rep. Greg Walden's "sound science" bill, which would require peer review for scientific data used in ESA decisions and solicit input from landowners for species recovery plans. Jamie Rappaport Clark, vice president of Defenders of Wildlife, says that Walden's bill would take scientific decisions out of the hands of scientists and delay species protection efforts. Walden and Atkinson are from the same district in southwest Oregon.

Atkinson says that ESA reform is necessary because the act has imposed hardships on Oregon landowners. "I think you could argue that Oregonians really feel the heavy hand of a federal law implemented from far

away," he says. The senator brushes off concerns from environmental organizations that the conservative push for ESA "reform" will weaken species protections. "Right now the nonprofits make a lot of money from scare tactics," he says.

Ivan Maluski of the Sierra Club's Portland office says that Atkinson's measure is bad public policy for the Oregon Legislature. "The biggest problem with the ESA is that Congress is not adequately funding efforts to recover species, and there's ongoing habitat degradation," he says. "Oregonians should view this effort as a part of a larger agenda to undermine every measure of environmental protection that we have gained over the last 30 years." — Kera Abraham



WALDEN

FED BUCKS ON CHOP BLOCK

Oregon stands to lose an estimated \$769 million in federal support over the next five years under the new Bush budget. A new analysis released this week predicts cuts to a wide range of programs including K-12 education, Head Start, environmental programs, foster care, AIDS drugs, community development and child care assistance.

The analysis, published Feb. 22 by the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, looks only at "discretionary" spending, which does not include other cuts proposed by the president in entitlement programs such as Medicaid, food stamps and farm subsidies.

"The president's choices about where to invest federal dollars over the next five years do not match with the priorities of most Oregonians," says Michael Leachman, policy analyst at the Oregon Center for Public Policy, which assisted in the report's release. "The president wants to shift federal priorities away from investing in Oregon's children, away from protecting the environment, and away from working families and toward a few super-wealthy families. That is not

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



what most Oregonians want."

Bush proposes to reduce federal funding for education programs, including programs funded under the No Child Left Behind Act. Total federal education funding would decline by 14 percent by 2010 under the president's plan, according to the analysis. Cash-strapped K-12 education in Oregon would lose a total \$120 million over the next five years, counting only inflation, not growth in the student population.

Much of the reduction in K-12 education funding would come from cuts to special education programs. "There's not a school district in Oregon that isn't struggling to cover the costs of special education," said Leachman. "But the president's plan is to dig the hole deeper." Special education programs in Oregon would see cuts totaling an estimated \$85 million over the next five years, according to the analysis.

PIELC LISTS SPEAKERS

Imprisoned Eugene activist Jeffrey "Free" Luers is listed as a keynote speaker at the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference (PIELC) on the UO campus March 3-6, and more surprise guests might join the list as the world conference draws nearer.

This year's theme is "Living As If Nature Mattered," inspired by the book by Bill Devall on "Deep Ecology." Devall is one of the keynote speakers March 3.

Luers, serving 22 years for burning three trucks at an SUV dealer's lot, will not be led to the podium in leg irons by armed guards, but rather will give a previously recorded address, according to Zack Mazer, one of the law student organizers.

An estimated 3,000 environmental attorneys, scientists and activists from around the world are gathering in Eugene for the 23rd annual PIELC and the keynoters list includes Devall, Fernando Dognac, Beverly Wright, Gail Small, Carla Garcia Zendejas, Dune Lankard, Samuel Epstein, Rod Coronado, Leslie Carothers, Zygmunt Plater, Jane Akre and Steve Wilson.

At last count, 195 events are associated with the PIELC, offering massive over-

choice. At 4 pm Friday, for example, participants will have to pick from 14 different seminars and workshops ranging from gray wolves in Oregon to choosing law careers to "Making Foreign Companies Clean Up Transboundary Contamination."

For details and registration information, visit www.pielc.org

STOP 'HARD BARGAINING'

As the Lane Transit District labor dispute drags on, a group of citizens is weighing in to urge both the district and the union to return to the bargaining table.

The LTD/ATU Community Committee, composed of citizen volunteers, released a report Feb. 23 detailing its conclusions. The report emphasizes the public losses that the region would suffer in the event of a strike and asks both parties to offer fresh proposals in an attempt to resolve the dispute.

The committee asks the LTD board — which has chosen not to participate in bargaining — to get involved. "You represent all of the community, not just the management of LTD, and the community needs to hear from you," the report reads.

To the union, the committee says: Be willing to flex on a health care contract. While commending the union for postponing a strike scheduled for Feb. 1, the committee asks the union to adopt a more positive stance toward the district.

The committee asks the district to drop its proposed work rule changes, rethink its 4 percent cap on pay raises, and refrain from implementing the rest of its proposals so that the good faith bargaining can proceed.

In sum, the report calls on both parties to stop the "hard bargaining" that sully labor relations and seek a fair resolution.

— Kera Abraham

CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

Raw goat milk producer Vicky Wade's e-mail address was reported incorrectly ("The Raw Deal," 2/17). The correct address is rawgoatmilk@greatglen.net

Happening people

BY PAUL NEEVEL

CARRIE COPELAND

Back home on the foothills of Mount Spokane in Eastern Washington, Carrie Copeland was the black-sheep braniac and punk-rocker in a family of rodeo riders. But when she crossed the state for college in Bellingham, she got hooked on outdoor activities: hiking, biking, and rock climbing. "I studied biochem, but I hated being indoors," says Copeland, who switched to environmental education and spent summers teaching at an adventure camp on Orcas Island. After graduation in 1997, she was hired as a crew leader by Eugene's Northwest Youth Corps. "I was shocked at how hard it was to build trails," she admits. "But the kids walked away with self-confidence, a love of nature, and a wad of cash." Founded in 1984, NYC employs teenagers from around the U.S. on conservation projects for the BLM, the Forest Service, and parks throughout the West. As many as 40 crews of 10 workers each are in the field during the peak summer season. After eight years with NYC, most recently as field director, and now married to NYC administrator Jeff Parker, Copeland retired last month to devote more time to her nine-month-old son Owen and to nursing school studies at LCC.

