

# news Briefs



## CALIFORNIA SUES EWEB

The state of California has sued the Eugene Water and Electric Board for illegal price gouging during the electric crisis in 2001, according to an April bond prospectus filed by EWEB.

Enron, the collapsed Texas electric trading corporation, has been sued by many power users for creating an artificial electricity crisis in 2001 that dramatically drove up power prices. EWEB had to pay more for power during the crisis, but apparently was also able to sell some power contracts to California at the inflated prices.

California sued EWEB in February to get those contracts rescinded, its money back and also payment for unspecified damages.

EWEB states in the bond document that they believe they have a valid defense and will "vigorously contest" the allegation in court. But, EWEB states, "no prediction can be offered at this time of the amount or ranges of any potential loss." — *Alan Pittman*

## BUCKS FOR SMALL TREES

The U.S. Forest Service recently granted \$1 million to fund forest projects in Oregon. The grant was made possible by a partnership between Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith, who supported a provision to the 2003 Healthy Forests Restoration Act that authorized \$5 million annually through 2008 for projects to improve the commercial use of woody debris and small-diameter trees from public forests.

Forrest Fleischman, policy advocate for Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics (FSEEE), views the provision as potentially positive for forest health — depending on where it's applied.

Thinning small-diameter trees in dense forests allows larger trees to thrive, and developing commercial uses for woody debris eases some of the pressure for logging old growth. "Developing markets for smaller-diameter wood is very important, because a lot of what we have in our national forests and on public lands is dense, small timber,"

Fleischman says. "There are forests around Eugene that are like Douglas fir plantations, where it makes sense to take some of the trees out and improve the health of those forests."

But Fleischman adds a note of caution: The provision could allow the Forest Service to cut small-diameter trees in places where they are critical to the ecosystem, such as removing slow-growing junipers from the high desert. "Location is important," he says. "Just because a tree is small doesn't mean it's good to cut it. It depends on what conditions it's growing in and the history of the location."

In another move to allocate federal dollars for Oregon's environment, Wyden and Smith are pushing for more than \$9 million for natural resource projects across the state, including land acquisitions at the Columbia River Gorge and the Upper Klamath Lake National Wildlife Refuge. On June 29, the U.S. Senate included the funding in its FY2006 interior appropriations bill, which will now head to a conference committee to work out differences with the House version.

— *Kera Abraham*

## SPEAKERS AT COUNTRY FAIR

People from all over the world flock to the Oregon Country Fair in Veneta each July to soak up art, music, entertainment, counterculture and ideas, and it all happens again this weekend. In recent years the OCF has drawn a growing number of noted speakers and this year's line-up includes:

- Friday: Dr. Andrew Weil, alternative health authority; Francisco Letelier, Latin American poet and muralist; Laura "Piece" Kelley, poet, arts educator and student of life.

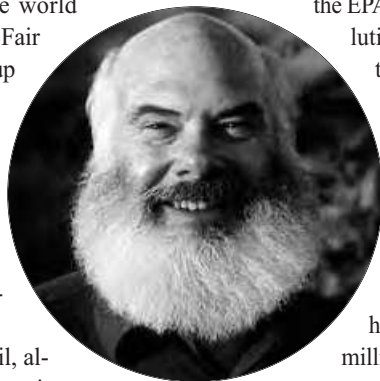
- Saturday: Stephen Gaskin, '60s counterculture icon, on "What I Still Believe In;" Middle East panel on "Refusing to be Enemies: Jewish and Muslim Men: Growing up in the Middle East;" Jeff Golden on "Politics for grown-ups;" gender equity panel on "Transgender and Gender Queer people: Life, Issues and Identity."

- Sunday: Winona LaDuke, Native American spokesperson; panel discussion on the influence of the '60s hippies on the 21st century; Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Code Pink, who says "Raise hell and bring the troops home!"

The list may be incomplete as of press time. An updated OCF performance schedule is available at [www.oregoncountryfair.org](http://www.oregoncountryfair.org)

## SEWAGE 'BLENDING'

The local sewage plant flushes partially treated sewage into the Willamette River during heavy rains. The Metropolitan Wastewater Management Commission flushes the dirty water into the river through an unwritten loophole in federal clean water



Andrew Weil

regulations. The loophole allows the plant to bypass secondary water treatment for part of its flow and then blend the dirty water back into treated water for discharge into the river, according to a MWMC memo this month.

In a rarity for the Bush administration, the EPA proposed closing that pollution loophole in 2003. But the MWMC, other sewage plants and Republicans joined in successfully lobbying against the proposed rule change and it was withdrawn in May. MWMC staff said closing the loophole could have cost the agency \$89 million to add peak flow treatment capacity.

But while the sewage plant is off the hook from EPA, it still could be sued by a third party. The unwritten loophole isn't explicitly authorized in the treatment plant's discharge permit.

Who might sue? Corvallis draws most of its drinking water from the Willamette downstream from Eugene. So, after "blending" in Eugene and treatment in Corvallis, what we flush, they drink. — *Alan Pittman*

## \$12 TICKETS

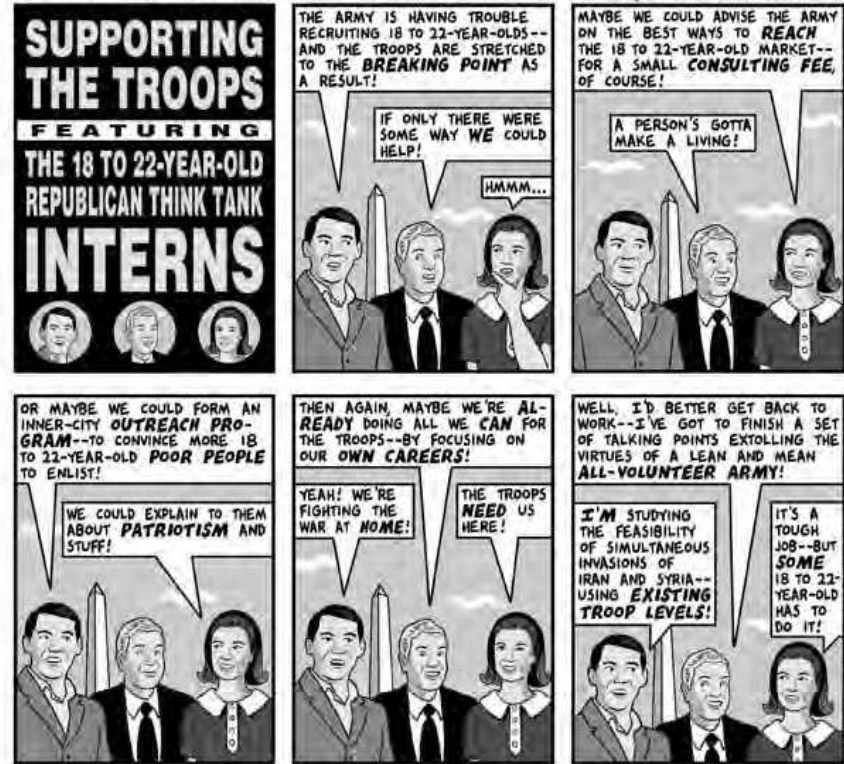
The city of Eugene has raised its parking tickets from \$10 to \$12. The city issues about 70,000 tickets a year for meter and time zone violations.

Eugene's ticket cost will be higher than the \$10 that Salem and Medford charge but lower than the \$16 charge in Portland. The city last raised its parking fines 12 years ago.

The additional revenue will help build and operate parking garages downtown and increase the city's general fund. Violators can now pay by credit card at the city's website, [www.ci.eugene.or.us](http://www.ci.eugene.or.us)

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



## GET NAKED

Local residents have been celebrating independence from the Brits this week, and some are celebrating independence from clothing. Nude Recreation Week runs July 4-10 and local organizers are inviting first-timers to get naked and see how it feels.

Members of the Willamettan nudists are observing the annual celebration at Terwilliger Hot Springs this week, though it might be difficult to tell them from independent nudists. Terwilliger is managed by Hoodoo Recreational Services as a clothing optional facility. The Willamettans Family Nudist Resort located in Marcola is hosting an open house on July 16. Call 933-2809 for further information.

The annual celebration is sponsored by



the American Association for Nude Recreation, whose mission is to "promote, enhance and protect in appropriate settings, nude recreation and nude living in the Americas." It is the oldest and largest organization of its kind, representing nearly 50,000

people who enjoy clothes-free recreation throughout North America.

## CORRECTIONS/ CLARIFICATIONS

Our apologies to anyone who showed up early for a meeting on campaign finance reform at Growers Market July 5. Our story last week should have had the meeting times from 7 to 8:30 pm. For information on future meetings and how to get involved in two Oregon ballot initiatives, e-mail [brooke@demaction.com](mailto:brooke@demaction.com), call 684-4408 or visit [www.fairelections.com](http://www.fairelections.com)