

## CITY COUNCIL WOPR VOTE

On Monday Feb. 11 Eugene's City Council plans to weigh in on the controversial Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR). The public comment on the plan ended earlier this month, but the BLM is still in the decision-making process.

Councilor Betty Taylor will bring forward a resolution opposing the Bureau of Land Management's WOPR. The BLM plan would cut down old-growth forests in areas around Eugene and triple the timber output in the area.

The resolution calls for the BLM to reject the alternatives offered in the WOPR and asks the U.S. Congress to pass legislation that "provides stable county payments based on ecosystem services such as clean water and air, recreational opportunities, carbon storage, and habitat conservation." The resolution also asks Congress to protect Oregon's mature and old-growth forests and advance restoration-driven forestry projects.

"The Cascadia Wildlands Project has been working to educate the council and mayor on the implications of WOPR for Eugeneans," says CWP's Josh Laughlin. CWP is calling for concerned Eugeneans to weigh on the issue, either at the Feb. 11 meeting or via an email to Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy. Contact Josh Laughlin at jlaughlin@cascadawild.org or call 434-1463 for more information. — Camilla Mortensen



## BIKE AND WALK THE GUT

Imagine Willamette Street closed to cars on a summer Sunday morning from 29th Street to the train station. Kids in strollers, on bikes, neighbors chatting, stopping for coffee, food booths, costumes, music, dancing in the streets — all this could happen monthly in a quiet, safe and sustainable open space through the heart of South Eugene.

That was the vision of about 30 bike and pedestrian advocates who gathered in a work session at a City of Eugene Walking and Biking Summit on Jan. 26th.

Longtime local cycling advocate Paul Moore said the fun event would promote green transportation and personal and community health. Instead of "cruising the gut" in cars, Moore said, Eugene could "walk and bike the gut."

"And lose your gut," piped in another cyclist.

Hundreds of cities throughout the U.S. and the world regularly or annually close busy thoroughfares for such walking and biking festivals. Portland's annual Bridge Pedal closes lanes on ten central bridges, including the towering I-5 bridge, and attracts 20,000 people a year. "It's just such a hoot," said city transportation planner Cindy Clarke.

"It could have an impact like Bridge Pedal," said Moore. Closing the street for the event would help promote cycling and walking as healthier, greener transportation, he said. "You give people the experience," said Moore. "This shows them how to do it."

In Portland the cycling rate has almost doubled in the last decade. Eugene still has a higher rate, but bike commuting here dropped from 8 percent in 1990 to 5.5 percent now, according to Census figures.

The event will also help build support for bike lanes and safe sidewalks on the busy Willamette Street while promoting alternative transportation, Moore said. "This moves them in that direction faster than anything else I know."

One participant questioned whether closing Willamette to traffic would be feasible. "I love the idea of Willamette," he said but, "to do that would be an incredibly major political battle." The man instead suggested closing a low traffic neighborhood street. "It's much easier to accomplish."

But other participants said closing a side street would not attract the people needed to make the event a success. A major draw of the event in Portland and other cities is the ability to bike or walk quietly on a thoroughfare that usually roars with dangerous traffic.

On a Sunday morning there's little traffic, and Willamette has many parallel, alternative streets that could be used, one man pointed out. "I don't see it dramatically affecting people."

Meeting participants pointed out that in other cities the crowds attracted by such road closures have been a major boost to local businesses along the route.

Moore said the event would allow cross car traffic at signalized intersections with volunteers helping with safety. A similar model has worked in other cities.

Clark said the city would legally be required to use police officers to control the signaled intersections. But, she said, "we have the support of the EPD and the city" to do a new walking and biking event.

Clark said the city will plan and facilitate another meeting next month about the walk and bike the gut event. She cautioned that "it does take a lot, a lot, to plan and pull off a major event." But, she said, "we've got a lot of great energy, a lot of great ideas." — Alan Pittman

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



## news Briefs



## BAN ON WINTER BURNING

On Jan. 24, Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA) issued its first red advisory since 1991. Eugene residents were asked not to use wood burning that day to heat their homes in order to help reduce air pollution in the form of particulate matter. Local businesses were not asked to curtail their emission of particulates or other pollutants during the ban.

Wood burning creates the same particulate matter (PM 2.5) that causes breathing problems for many Oregonians during field burning season. In the winter, air can stagnate over the valley in what is called an inversion, trapping the smoke and raising particulate levels above the Environmental Protection Agency's standards.

This was the first red advisory for Eugene since the pollution program began in 1991. "Air quality has improved" over the past several years, says LRAPA's Merlyn Hough, but the EPA reviews its standards every five years and tightened them in 2006.

Springfield, Goshen, Pleasant Hill and other nearby areas were not affected by the ban though they were affected by the smoky air. This is because Eugene's city ordinances call for a ban to be in effect when particulates become unhealthy, but Springfield isn't due to vote on its ordinance until Feb. 4. Lane County will vote on the ordinance in February as well. Until then LRAPA, the agency that monitors PM 2.5 emissions, hopes homeowners in those areas will choose not to burn dur-

ing red advisories even if they are not faced with the \$500 fine.

Industries in and around Eugene that emit PM 2.5 and other pollutants are not affected by the ban. Hough says this is because they have "tighter control requirements all of the time." The Eugene Toxics Right-to-Know database doesn't track PM 2.5 emissions. But according to the National Climatic Data Center Air Stagnation index, the same stagnant air that traps particulate matter also traps gaseous toxic pollution.

— Camilla Mortensen

## PESTICIDE LINKED TO AUTISM

What is behind the increasing frequency of autism? Twenty years ago, autism was diagnosed in about one in 5,000 U.S. children. By 2002, that frequency had risen to one in 250 and is now at roughly one in 150. In some states (and in the U.K.) it is as high as one in 100. Is this alarming increase in diagnosis due simply to a broader definition of autism or a greater awareness of the disorder? Several studies say no to both theories.

Because changes in the standards for diagnosing autism occurred in the early '90s, one would expect to see a rapid increase in diagnosis followed by some tapering off. In fact the pattern of increase shows a steady rise over the entire period up to the present.

Over the past decade a number of ideas have emerged to explain the increase in autism. Mercury preservatives in childhood vaccines are still suspected by some people,