

the work to be done," she said.

During his portion of the session and after noting that his clean-cut appearance and suit made him "overdressed for the occasion," Rey discussed the effects the recent election of Barack Obama stand to have on forest policy, an election he said in itself was "not transformative." In contrast to the other panels that spoke hopefully of the new administration, Rey warned environmentalists that "time is of the essence for public lands bills" because with so many other pressing issues, such as the economy, public lands may not get the discussion time on the Senate floor that they need in order to pass.

When asked specifically about what he was most proud of during his tenure at the USDA by Andy Stahl of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, one of the many groups who has been fighting Rey's forest policies in the courts, Rey said he was felt he left his department in better shape — he was responsible, he said, for the first "clean audit" in the USDA's history. He also touted his work on the HFI as saving National Forests and the people who live near them from catastrophic wildfires, a claim that raised eyebrows in the audience of forest conservationists.

Brown and Rey both speculated on the possible effects of the Obama administration hiring environmentalists. Will environmental lawyers "go soft" on their lawsuits because they don't want to sue their friends? Brown noted Rey was able to implement many of his policies through skillful negotiation and suggested that enviros "take a page out of Mark's playbook — there are a lot of advantages to suit settling."

After the conference, Rey a former timber lobbyist, continued to speak on topics that sound environmentally friendly, on Monday, March 2, he gave a talk at OSU called "The Spread of Cooperative Conservation as the Fourth Chapter of the American Conservation

Experience," and on March 3, his stimulus-package oriented topic was "The Growth of Private Markets from Ecosystem Services: A Potential New Revenue Stream to Support Conservation Work." — *Camilla Mortensen*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Look for more coverage of the PIELC next week.

OREGON CORPORATE TAXES RANK 2ND LOWEST

Oregon's state and local business taxes are second lowest in the nation, according to a study by an anti-tax corporate association.

The study by the Council On State Taxation (COST), an association of 600 corporations lobbying for lower taxes, found that Oregon tied for second lowest business taxes in the nation as a share of the state economy.

Oregon's state and local business taxes were 3.7 percent of gross state product compared to a national average of 4.9 percent, according to COST. By comparison, Washington state was at 5.5 percent.

With Oregon looking at closing schools early and packing more kids in classrooms, the study has lead to calls for increasing Oregon's rock-bottom business taxes. The Oregon Center for Public Policy estimated that the state could raise \$1.6 billion in revenue and still have an average business tax burden.

OCCP also noted that the corporate study found Oregon's businesses got the second highest bang for the buck in the ratio of direct business services to business taxes paid. —*Alan Pittman*

IT'S ABOUT TIME

By David Wagner



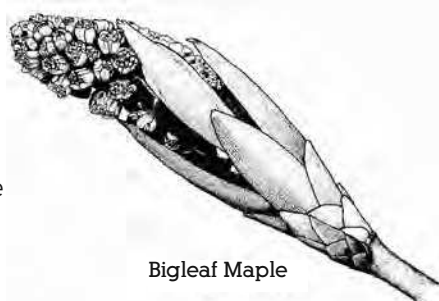
March is a month of great anticipation. The winter rainy season isn't over but the woodland wildflowers are starting to bloom. The peak flush of blossoms builds after the equinox. Bigleaf maple buds burst by month's end.

A dry spell gives a headstart on gardening. Spread fresh mulch on the perennial beds. Onion starts don't mind occasional frost, so plant them now. If you like arugula, sow seeds now. Plant peas. Then, pray for rain.

When a day dawns bright and clear, returning migrant song birds greet the warming of the morning with tweetles of territorial claims. The little frogs have started singing, too, only croaks at first but choruses of frigget coming soon. These, of course sing at night.

Stepping out on clear nights gives a chance to look south and talk to Orion. Every night he's a bit further to the right. It won't be long now, and he'll be out of sight by bedtime. Gone all summer, he'll return in the fall.

It is good to see herons return to the nests in the cottonwoods of east Delta Ponds. They haven't used this rookery for several years. More fish in the ponds nearby? A cormorant seen gobbling down a big fish just lately gives positive evidence. The golden eyes are making love dances in the ponds. All the ducks and geese have paired. Soon there will be fluffy ducklings and goslings to coo over. Remember not to feed them bread, or their wings will become deformed from overnutrition.



Bigleaf Maple

David Wagner is a botanist who has lived in Eugene for more than 30 years. He teaches mosses and is president of the Eugene Natural History Society. He may be reached at fernzenmosses@me.com

• Some local **small businesses continue thriving** while bigger companies like Monaco Coach are crashing. Turtle Mountain LLC of Eugene has announced that its organic coconut milk product sales are expanding nationwide. Sales were up 30 percent in 2008 and continue to grow this winter. The company has gone from 20 to 90 employees in the last few years, including a Springfield plant. We hear Raw Dog Leather is doing well. Kate Kubicek owns the small biz that sells Eugene-made custom dog leashes, collars and toys for pets (www.rawdogleather.com). Two new businesses at WestTown on 8th have opened, adding more life to downtown: the Studio West Fine Art Gallery and Glass Blowing Studio, and Jeremy Covert Studio. Receptions for the artists were held Feb. 27.

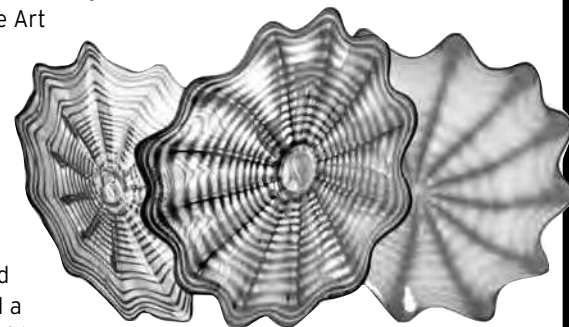
• **PeaceHealth** recently announced \$10 million in expense cutbacks, but the medical giant is also committed to spending \$20 million toward a \$29.8 million new hospital at Friday Harbor on the affluent San Juan Island in Washington state. As recently as Jan.

20 the *Journal of the San Juans* newspaper reported that contract negotiations had been "finalized," but were awaiting approval from local hospital district authorities and the PeaceHealth board in Bellview, Wash. But we hear from Jenny Ulum at PeaceHealth that "no final decisions have been made regarding the San Juan project." The San Juan paper back in June reported that PeaceHealth was prepared to "assume all financial risk as well as management responsibilities."

Why build a hospital on San Juan Island? The island currently has only an aging and small clinic, forcing many residents to seek medical care on the mainland. Profits from the new hospital would reportedly be used to defray the costs of providing health care to low-income patients. But are there many? Struggling people can be found everywhere, but the average price of homes on the market in Friday Harbor is about \$644,000, while home prices statewide in Washington run about \$266,000.

• In PR spinning its **Springfield EmX clearcut**, LTD has lost more than a forest of trees on Pioneer Parkway. It's lost the public trust. Now, when LTD proposes even more controversial bus rapid transit lines through Eugene neighborhoods, who will trust they are telling the whole truth? That's a shame. Eugene desperately needs BRT to work for its livability and the environment. It's too bad the PR people at LTD couldn't be up front and see the reputation forest for the spin.

• **The Register-Guard** is publishing a series of large ads touting its advertising reach, compared to other local media. The daily paper claims to have more 18-to-34-year-old readers than *Eugene Weekly*, but the ads are deceptively cherry-picking the data. Media Audit reports that the R-G only beats us in that category by comparing readers who look at any one section of the R-G once a week with readers who pick up at EW once a month. The radio and TV comparisons are equally suspect. As R-G Publisher Tony Baker told City Club last month, the paper has given up on the 18-to-34 demographic. "We're not going to chase them," he said. "They're not reading newspapers." Actually, about 38,000 of EW's 89,600 readers in Lane County are in that younger age group. The average age of EW readers is just under 40, while the average age of R-G readers is about 49.



Sun Flair Platters by Conrad Williams on display at Studio West Fine Art Gallery

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