

EWEB LETS ARROWS FLY AT NUTRIA INFESTATION



PHOTO COURTESY OF USFWS

EWEB is trying to rid its waterways of destructive nutria through lethal trapping along Waterville and Leaburg canals, live trapping in the Waterville pond, and the utility has successfully eradicated a number of the large semi-aquatic rodents by having them hunted by bow-and-arrow.

Lyllian Breitenstein saw posted signs warning of the lethal traps near the waterways and became concerned that the traps could kill dogs or native wildlife like otters. "This is also not the way to control nutria. From what I have read, more will just take their place" Breitenstein says. She says a better way to control the non-native rats is by "making the canal a less attractive place for them to burrow" through methods such as vegetation control, increasing water levels in winter and decreasing levels in summer.

She says, "I realize nutria are not people's favorite animal but it is not their fault that they were brought here and let go. Isn't Eugene supposed to welcome diversity? Are any of us really native?"

Joe Harwood of EWEB says the utility originally planned to place the lethal traps below the waterline at the pond as well as the canals, and place warning signs in the area. But EWEB changed its mind, as the lethal traps potentially would be too dangerous to kids and pets. "You don't want to hurt someone, or hurt someone's pet that they've had for a long time," says Harwood.

He says there are lethal traps in areas that are closed off to public access along the Leaburg and Walterville canals. The canals divert water from the McKenzie River to generate power at Walterville and Leaburg hydroelectric plants.

EWEB began the program to eliminate the nutria, according to Harwood, after a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission inspection noted burrowing tunnels in the banks of the power canals. The nutria's tunnels can weaken banks and earthen dams, leading to potential failure. FERC ordered EWEB to repair the existing burrow damage and keep the embankments free of future damage.

According to EWEB memos, the utility hired Johnson Wildlife Services to manage the nutria, which are native to South America. ODFW classifies them as "unprotected nongame wildlife," which means they can be trapped or shot. They cannot be relocated or released after trapping and must be euthanized.

EWEB commissioner Joann Ernst has looked into the nutria program and says, "It is horrible that we have to do this to an animal that never asked to be brought here. Having said this I think EWEB is doing what they have to do to meet regulations and keep reliable electricity in the most humane way possible."

Harwood says in addition to the lethal traps in the non-public areas, live traps have been placed along Walterville pond. He says according to Oregon law, the traps must be checked every 48 hours. The pest management firm checks the traps at least every 24 hours, partly because there has been "a lot of mischief out there. Folks have been letting the nutria go."

Breitenstein isn't sure the traps are being checked often enough. She says she noticed one live trap "was tripped and several were partially under water on New Year's Eve and nothing was touched or changed Saturday late morning."

In addition to the live and lethal trapping, EWEB used an archer armed with a compound bow from early August through October to shoot nutria. Ernst says the firm determined the best way to kill the nutria was with bow and arrow, as shooting guns in the area was thought to be too dangerous.

The archer was assisted by a spotter who lit the rodents with a bright light. The archer and assistant went out "two to three nights per week for four hours," Harwood says. "It was really successful."

Harwood says between the trapping and the shooting, "we haven't had any non-nutria kills."

Ernst says in addition to the lethal methods, she met with EWEB's environmental department to make sure prevention methods were also used to address the nutria problem. She says, "One suggestion I had was lining the sides with an impermeable material like screening. They were going to look into this and come up with other ideas." — *Camilla Mortensen*

news Briefs

DOWNTOWN PROJECT TOURS THIS WEEK

The city of Eugene is hosting open houses and virtual walking tours of eight potential downtown projects this week. Some of these projects would potentially involve urban renewal district (URD) spending. City staff has recommended a renewal and expansion of limits on URD spending downtown.

The URD is controversial in that millions of dollars in future tax revenues that would normally go to support schools and other public services would be diverted to a fund that the city staff could use, or borrow against, to subsidize development. City voters in 2007 turned down Measure 20-134, a URD spending cap expansion that would have subsidized national chain stores downtown that would have competed with local businesses.

"Right now we are focusing on downtown revitalization projects," says Laura Hammond of the city Planning & Development Department. "The council will be discussing tools to fund the projects at its Jan. 11 work session."

The first of the two events this week was held Wednesday, Jan. 6. The second is from 6 to 8 pm Thursday, Jan. 7, at DIVA, 110 W. Broadway.

The open houses include a "virtual" walking tour of potential project sites and information stations where participants can learn more about the project details, job creation, costs and timing. The eight proj-

ects include LCC's new downtown center, a new VA clinic, downtown safety improvements, business assistance and housing, an arts and entertainment district, the Beam development, green infrastructure and downtown parking improvements.

"We know that no single project will solve the challenges downtown all at once," says city project manager Amanda Nobel Flannery in a press release. "But together, these projects could work to generate jobs and create an active downtown center that feels safe and welcoming for everyone. We are looking forward to hearing what people think."

Feedback, in addition to the open houses, can be through www.vibranteugene.org. The website has project descriptions, online surveys and an online community discussion board. — *Ted Taylor*

NEW LAWS GO INTO EFFECT THIS WEEK

Several new laws go into effect with the New Year, according to Oregon Sen. Bill Morrisette of Springfield, who sponsored some of the new legislation in the Senate.

- SB 734 requires private health insurers to cover up to \$500 for the cost of tobacco use cessation programs for persons over 15 years of age. Options include counseling, medications, or a combination of both. Smoking is the leading cause of death in the U.S. and about 28 percent of teens smoke. "Insurance companies did not oppose this legislation because they realize it saves them and society money in the long run," says Morrisette.

- SB 348 actually went into effect on July 1 and is called "Max's Law," named after Max Conrad, who suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) playing football at Waldport High School in 2001. "The law sets high school football standards that colleges and even the NFL are struggling to develop," says Morrisette. "It requires school districts in Oregon to

Happening people BY PAUL NEEVEI

AWAB ALRAWWE

Born during the first Gulf War, UO freshman Awab Alrawwe grew up in downtown Baghdad. "A kid in my school had a fight with the president's nephew," he recalls. "Four bodyguards came in and he disappeared forever." Alrawwe's mother, a petroleum engineer, left her job when he, and then his sister Danya, were born. His father, a geologist, quit his job when his pay was cut to \$3 a month in 1997. The family house had to be sold. "The war was a tough time. You never knew when you'd be killed," says Alrawwe. "I kept going to school. The worst year was 2006, maybe three days of school a week." His mother returned to work at the petroleum ministry in '05, but death threats in '07 pushed the family to Syria, where Alrawwe finished high school and discovered the Iraqi Student Project, a non-profit that puts Iraqi youth into U.S. colleges. "I worked with the project in Syria for a year," he says. "We volunteered with the U.N., the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, many different activities." In Eugene since September, Alrawwe lives with host parents Mark Siemens and Jacquie Travis. "Next term I'll take poli-sci, French, and Spanish," he says. "I love languages. I'll be teaching Arabic in language circles at the EMU." (An earlier story on Alrawwe and how to contribute to the Iraqi Student Project can be found in the *EW* online archives, Nov. 19, 2009.)

