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rate that beekeepers consider acceptable.

Clothianidin, an insecticide used on crops like corn and sugar beets, was found in pollen stored in the hive. The Purdue scientists also found that bees have multiple mechanisms of pesticide exposure, including farm machinery exhaust materials, agricultural soil and even dandelions visited by the foraging bees. Clothianidin is acutely toxic to bees and may weaken their ability to survive other threats like mites and weather.

Sierra Club's Many Rivers Group Chair Sally Nunn says eliminating substances toxic to bees should stay on the local radar. "For those of us who love fresh, local peaches, tomatoes and other produce, safeguarding our pollinators in Lane County and beyond should be a high priority."

Local beekeepers are trying to protect their colonies by establishing spray-free zones. Doug Hornaday, who began keeping bees a year ago, says, "The actual honeycomb starts to poison the bees after five years." Hornaday believes there is neighborhood support for the first zone around Madison Meadows, and he hopes to establish more zones "one block at a time." For more information, contact healthybeeshealthygardens@gmail.com

— Shannon Finnell

WOLVES IN THE HOUSE (AND SENATE)

Predator advocates are wary of the latest anti-wolf and anti-cougar bills that have been introduced to the current abbreviated session of the Oregon Legislature and call the bills a waste of time and money.

Sally Mackler of Predator Defense says, "This is a session that's supposed to be focused on the budget and on the economic crisis we are facing. If we had all the time we had spent on the cougar bill we could have fixed the economy by now."

Mackler says a bill to reverse the voter-mandated ban on sport hunting cougars with

packs of dogs has been introduced at every session for the past 15 years. HB 4119, which would allow the hunting of cougars with hounds on a county by county basis, will be heard before the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee on Valentine's Day, Mackler says. She calls the bill a "poorly thought out and bad idea," and says among its problems is that "county administrators are not trained to make wildlife decisions."

In 2010 Oregon sold almost 50,000 cougar hunting tags, Mackler says. She says Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has not given her the information on how many tags were sold in 2010 and how many cougars were killed

Mackler says Predator Defense also objects to HB 4158, a bill that would call for "the conservation of wolves to include killing wolves."

She says, "If that isn't an oxymoron, I don't know what is."

She says there are "already vehicles in place to address depredation by wolves in the Oregon wolf plan that are very specific."

Cascadia Wildlands, Oregon Wild and the Center for Biological Diversity have sent letters to Sen. Jackie Dingfelder and Sen. Floyd Prozanski saying the bill "threatens to undermine both wolf recovery in Oregon and the state's Endangered Species Act" and asking the legislators to defeat the bill, which is being pushed by the Oregon Cattlemen's Association.

A letter to Gov. John Kitzhaber signed by 21 conservation groups asks the governor "to strongly and clearly oppose any legislation that would circumvent the state Endangered Species Act."

Mackler says that "Less than 5 percent of depredation in Oregon is due to predation and a tiny fraction of that is due to wolves." She says 95 percent of livestock deaths are due to exposure, illnesses and pregnancy in cattle, which she calls preventable on the part of ranchers "if they took a more active roll in the husbandry of the animals."

Cattle, Mackler says, unlike wolves, are not an endangered species in Oregon.

— Camilla Mortensen

CHILD CARE CUTS

Oregon's diminishing coffers have put many social services at risk, and Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) is no exception. Money has been set aside for the program, but advocates fear it will get lost in the budget fray.

ERDC subsidizes the day care costs of low-income families using a formula that accounts for income and child care costs in a family's zip code. The income ceiling for a family of four is \$40,800 a year.

Stacy Michaelson, a policy associate at Children First for Oregon, says that the average monthly cost of child care for ages 0-6 years can reach \$939 in higher-cost metro areas, gobbling up a huge portion of a family's income.

Springfield resident Shae Dutchover, a single mother of a 3-year-old, works full-time earning more than minimum wage and is working toward a bachelor's degree, but she says there's no way she could afford both child care and rent without ERDC. "I feel really strongly about not wanting to be a part of the system and have the state help me out," Dutchover says. "I'm trying not to perpetuate that; I'm trying to get out of that — to where I can support myself and pay for my own childcare."

But ERDC is now in an enrollment freeze as it waits for the current families to leave the program.

ERDC was capped at 9,000 families at the end of 2010 in response to a budget shortfall, but Michaelson says that was with the understanding that

'Parents who receive a child care subsidy stay employed longer.'

- Bobbie Weber, OSU research associate

money would be set aside in an education stability fund and the program would be restored to at least 10,000 families by the end of the current budget cycle. But the money was moved to the general fund and now funding for ERDC is in jeopardy.

Advocates working to save ERDC are asking the Legislature to release \$6 million from the education stability fund to return the caseload to its goal of 10,000, and they say they'd like to see money that stems from federal grants go toward helping fund the program, which has almost 3,000 families on the waiting list with 100 more added each week.

Michaelson says that ERDC is also a big factor in the child care industry, which she says is a \$25 billion industry in Oregon, and she says the state's child care providers "by and large are small business owners, and so it's also about small business owners being able to stay open."

Bobbie Weber, a research associate at OSU's Family Policy Program, studies the social effects of programs like ERDC. What Weber found when she and her colleagues interviewed more than 500 parents who used ERDC and programs like it nationwide was that it made the difference between families "being able to make it or not."

Weber says the research shows the subsidy stabilizes employment. "Parents who receive a child care subsidy stay employed longer," she says. "Also it may mean if that job ends, having access to the subsidy allows them to get another job."

Without the subsidy program, parents patched together child care in whatever form they could manage — family members, older children, a neighbor the family didn't know very well — in an unstable network that didn't benefit the children the way steady providers did, Weber says. "And what often happens is they lose their jobs because it doesn't hold up."

— Shannon Finnell

Jennie Cupp

TENACIOUS TENANT WITH A CLEAR VIEW OF THE ROLE WE ALL HAVE IN SAVING ENERGY.

At the Eugene Water & Electric Board, we're empowering citizens with resources to save money and energy in their homes and businesses. For example, Jennie Cupp encouraged her landlord to replace her windows with ENERGY STAR qualified windows, saving money on her electric bill, keeping her family warm, and increasing her landlord's property value. To find out about EWEB's energy-saving programs for your own home, visit eweb.org/saveenergy or call 541-685-7000. Maybe yours will be the next powerful tale we tell.

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