

IS NO CANOLA GOOD CANOLA?

The Oregon Department of Agriculture is forging ahead with its plan to expand planting canola in the Willamette Valley, and canola, also known as rapeseed, opponents are fighting the weed-like plant fiercely. They say not only does canola risk the livelihoods of vegetable seed growers, but also canola is so easily dispersed that conventional (nonorganic) canola is often contaminated by genetically modified (GMO) crops.

Friends of Family Farmers (FFF) has filed a suit challenging the temporary rule that allows farmers to start planting canola in the Willamette Valley. More than 23,000 people, including 10,000 Oregonians, signed a petition asking ODA not to issue the temporary rule allowing for reducing the canola control district in the valley, according to FFF.

Frank Morton of Wild Garden Seed, which is part of the suit, says that when canola was planted in research plots in the Willamette Valley, Oregon State University researchers documented genetic flow between canola and other species. He says if the canola was GMO canola, then you would have GMO contamination. According to Morton, the OSU scientists decided canola was a one-way street — you can't reel it back in. The scientists did not advise introducing canola to the valley because of the risk to Oregon's more than \$32 million a year seed industry.

Morton says, "We know from our experience with Roundup Ready sugar beets — once in the ground you can't get it out of the ground."

Leah Rodgers of FFF says a Canadian study shows that 97 percent of the seed lots studied were contaminated by GMO canola. GMO canola easily cross-pollinates not only with other, non-GMO canola, but also with other brassica family vegetables like kale and rutabagas as well as the roadside weed wild mustard. Rodgers says that cattle also disperse canola. After the canola has been pressed for its oil to be used in biofuels, the feedstock is fed to dairy calves. Rodgers says the seeds are not always entirely crushed, and the calves then spread it in their manure.

It's still unclear where the demand to plant canola is coming from, and Rodgers says FFF has a lot of concerns about the process ODA used to put the canola rule in place.

Paulette Pyle of Oregonians for Food and Shelter, a group that was formed to advocate for aerial herbicide spraying, says, "OFS has no position on the growing of any crop." She adds, "We do support the legal use of tools our farmers need for growing agricultural crops such as canola, pesticides, fertilizers, etc." Pyle says that the farmers determine what they choose to grow and the group has many different types of farmers on its board.

Morton says that, ironically, there are other canola control districts in Oregon. One district is on the east side in Malheur County. Canola can be freely grown in most, though not all, of eastern Oregon. The control area is a strip along the Oregon-Idaho border, where it is restricted to protect seed

farmers in Idaho. In addition to the GMO contamination concern, Morton says canola can have root maggots, which affect all members of the brassica family. "A field of canola is a root maggot breeding ground," Morton says.

Morton and Friends of Family Farmers are joined in their efforts to fight canola by Oregon Tilth, the Oregon Clover Commission, Eugene-based National Center for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) and the Center for Food Safety, to name a few. The Center for Food Safety is also a party in the case against the temporary rule. Morton has written an opinion piece on the canola issue and the process with ODA at eugeneweekly.com — *Camilla Mortensen*

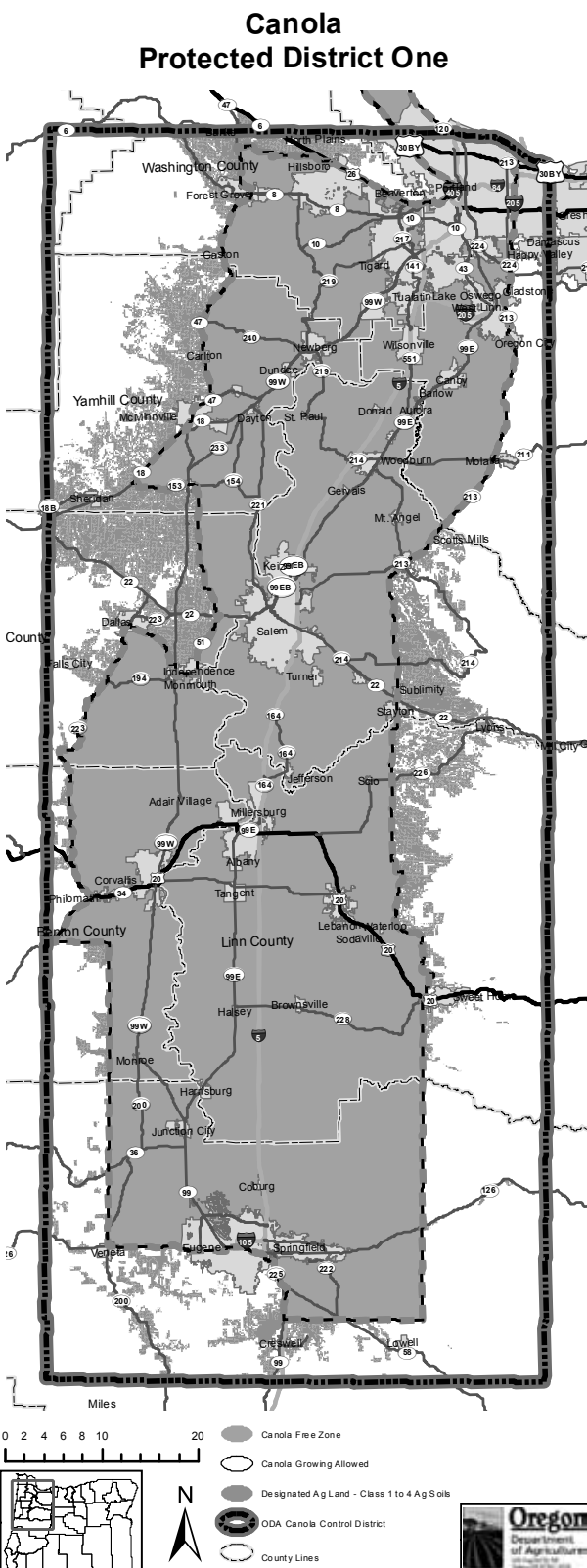
PESTICIDES IN CITY SPACES

National Honeybee Week has local bee enthusiasts abuzz with activity, canvassing neighborhoods, celebrating bees and asking the city of Eugene to stop using pesticides in public parks and other spaces. "We want to educate and empower ourselves to protect the bees because our government is refusing to do so, and that's at the federal, state and local levels," Lisa Arkin of Beyond Toxics says.

Arkin says that the most widely available chemicals for gardens and many crops are connected to colony collapse disorder (CCD), which has killed billions of honeybees over the past decade. That's why Beyond Toxics is going door-to-door, asking Eugeneans to take the honeybee pledge to stop using pesticides. After they complete pledges for entire blocks, Arkin says, local beekeepers working with Beyond Toxics are hoping to help residents set up honeybee hives.

But getting the pledge is essential, Arkin says, because even very low levels of pesticides have significant impacts on bees. Not only are neurotoxins in products like Weed and Feed and Roundup carried back to hives, poisoning the colony, they also threaten the valuable agricultural

CONTINUED P. 8



Happening people BY PAUL NEEVEL

TINA LARSON

"Wellness is possible for everyone," says Tina Larson, coordinator of the Pathways Learning Center (PLC), a program of the non-profit Laurel Hill Center, helping Lane County adults recover from severe mental illness. "They come here for some tools to put in their toolbox." Larson considered a nursing career when she was a student at the Lankenau Girls School in Philadelphia, but after graduation she found work as a flight attendant, and eventually moved to the West Coast. "I mostly flew to Japan the last five years," she says. "I had to retire at 32." Thirteen years later, living in Eugene, she trained as a certified nursing assistant and worked in the Sacred Heart Neonatal ICU while she studied psychology and sociology at LCC. "I went back to school so that I could work in social service," says Larson, who volunteered at White Bird Clinic in the mid-90s, was hired as a crisis worker, and served as White Bird volunteer coordinator until 2004. She has managed the Pathways program since it replaced the Harmony House social drop-in center in 2006. Many PLC classes are taught by peer teachers, also in recovery from mental illness. "We help people identify with their wellness and strength, not their disabilities," she says. "We focus on building skills so that people can take charge of their lives."

