

LRAPA'S FUTURE ON THE ROPES?

The question of whether a local air agency like Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA) is better for Lane County's air quality than moving to a state agency was the topic Commissioner Pete Sorenson wanted to see addressed at the County Commissioners' LRAPA work session Nov. 27. Sorenson says the agenda set for the meeting, which was called at the behest of Commissioner Jay Bozievich, was all about the agency and not about the air.

LRAPA is a local air agency which, according to its executive director, Merlyn Hough, who spoke at the work session, is responsible for everything from granting permits to industries that release air toxics to enforcing federal, state and local air pollution regulations and conducting public education and outreach regarding air quality.

LRAPA is funded through a combination of permit fees, federal and state grants and local government funding. LRAPA says that it also receives "Airmetrics enterprise revenues" from the local manufacture of portable air monitoring devices sold throughout the world.

According to Hough's report, the portion of its funding that LRAPA gets from Lane County is part of \$121,670 per year, split between the county and cities of Eugene, Springfield, Oakridge and Cottage Grove. In exchange, the report says, "LRAPA currently provides about \$680,710 per year of local ordinance-related services."

The agency has both been praised for its work to improve air quality in cities such as Oakridge that have been plagued with toxic air, mainly due to wood stove heating in the winter, and it has also been criticized as too favorable to industry in its permits to pollute.

Sorenson says that whenever large highway projects such as the West Eugene Parkway have been proposed, LRAPA has said they would not adversely affect air quality. However, car and diesel emissions have been cited as major concerns when it comes to Oregon's air. Sorenson wonders if the state Department of Environmental Quality has been more stringent on the effects the highway expansions have on air quality.

Other cities, such as Portland, rely upon the DEQ for air pollution issues, but according to *The Oregonian*, the agency said back in May that "it has exhausted its budget for the air toxics program and it has very little money for air pollution monitoring."

Sorenson says the work session was a good check-in and opportunity to review LRAPA, but he feels that health and air quality advocates should have been invited to participate along with city officials.

Sorenson read a letter from the county's Public Health Advisory Committee that advocated for LRAPA, and various city officials and commissioners said they did not want to make a change.

"If air quality can be improved by moving it to state level of regulation then I'm open to the idea of getting rid of LRAPA," Sorenson says. "But if the purpose is to get rid of regulation and minimize air quality then I will do what I can to stop it." — *Camilla Mortensen*

'But if the purpose is to get rid of regulation and minimize air quality then I will do what I can to stop it'

- COMMISSIONER PETE SORENSON

SMALL SEABIRD STOPS LOGGING, AGAIN

Is a small, speedy potato-shaped seabird the new spotted owl? If it wasn't already clear before: Clearcutting on hundreds of acres of coastal old-growth forests that are habitat for the threatened marbled murrelet is definitely at a standstill, this time thanks to a Nov. 19 ruling by federal Judge Ann Aiken in Eugene.

Conservation group Cascadia Wildlands had previously announced the voluntary cessation of logging in marbled murrelet habitat in the Elliott State Forest by the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) in response to the lawsuit Cascadia Wildlands and others had filed. One timber sale in the Tillamook State Forest had also been suspended, according to Kevin Weeks of ODF.

Weeks says ODF pulled a number of timber sales in June due to the lawsuit. In September, a memo in regard to the Coos operations plan, which determines the sales in the Elliott, later pulled 15 more projects planned for 2013 because, according to Weeks, they "have the same issues present as those identified in the lawsuit."

ODF argued that issuing an injunction on the logging was moot because the agency had already voluntarily suspended logging on the timber sales in the lawsuit, but Aiken ruled that because ODF had "retained the right to simply resume logging operations after giving notice, a possibility of the recurrence of the allegedly illegal logging activity exists."

Josh Laughlin of Cascadia Wildlands points out that Aiken's preliminary injunction not only prevents logging on the 11 timber sales named in the suit, it also broadens the suspension to "any further logging activities in known occupied marbled murrelet sites in the Tillamook, Clatsop and Elliott state forests."

The ruling is critical for marbled murrelets and makes the clearcutting suspension official, Laughlin says. He says that now the ball is in Gov. John Kitzhaber's court in regard to suspending what Laughlin calls "aggressive clearcutting plans on our public forests." Kitzhaber along with Secretary of State Kate Brown and Treasurer Ted Wheeler make up the State Land Board that governs Oregon's publicly owned state forests.

ODF has announced a 46-day public comment period began Nov. 26 on six additional timber sales in the Elliott State Forest that are not impacted by issues raised in the lawsuit, these sales "are anticipated to provide 9.8 million board-feet of timber for the current fiscal year, and an estimated \$2.48 million in net revenue for schools and county services in Oregon," according to the ODF announcement. To comment go to: wkly.ws/1e7 — *Camilla Mortensen*

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BY RAFAEL ALDAVE

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