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350 EUGENE RALLIES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN SALEM

PHOTO BY DON EWING

# ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

*Nonprofits talk pesticides, wildlife removal budget cuts and green jobs*

Virtually no protections are in place to safeguard watersheds and streams — both sources of drinking water in Oregon — from being contaminated by herbicides, says Jason Gonzales of Oregon Wild. This is just one of the pressing issues that environmental protection bills in Oregon’s 2017 Legislative session aim to address.

Other environmental concerns that could come up for vote this session include the transportation of oil, capping greenhouse gases, cutting the budget for predatory animal control and a bill that would create infrastructure for green jobs.

Two environmental nonprofits, Oregon Wild and 350 Eugene, spoke to *Eugene Weekly* about sustainable legislation that curbs carbon pollution, protects natural resources and the health of Oregonians.

Senate Bill 954 would prohibit aerial spraying in any watershed that contains a human drinking water source, such as a residence or school according to Oregon Wild. The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Environmental and Natural Resources.

Gonzales says this is a common-sense bill that was previously introduced as a ballot measure, but was challenged on technical aspects with regard to the ballot measure’s title by the logging industry, which held up the issue in court. Although Oregon Wild won that challenge it was too late to continue with the ballot measure process.

“Right here in western Lane County we have the community of Triangle Lake, where residents for years have found some of these forestry herbicides in their urine even when they are on well water from their own homes,” Gonzales says of tests that found atrazine and 2,4-D in residents’ urine samples. “That product is getting into their water systems as well as their food sources when they are growing food on their own properties.”

Aerial sprays are extremely unregulated, Gonzales says, adding that there isn’t a method in place for testing or cleaning up potentially contaminated drinking water sources.

“We are having a lot of trouble even getting state agencies to acknowledge the problem, and in situations where they’ve bordered on acknowledging the problem, reports have been buried or changed at the last minute to not reflect that,” Gonzales says.

He says an example of an agency’s backing down took place when the Environmental Protection Agency began testing and mentioned that herbicides were found in the Triangle Lake community only in earlier versions of their reports. “After challenges from the timber industry and political pressure being applied, the final version of the report didn’t contain that information,” Gonzales says.

Danielle Moser, also with Oregon Wild, says the nonprofit is also supporting parts of House Bill 5010, which would eliminate \$470,140 from the Oregon Department of Wildlife’s use of Wildlife Services, which is part of the federal Department of Agriculture. The nonprofit says it considers Wildlife Services a rogue agency due to its inhumane species killing practices. ODFW

proposed receiving money from Wildlife Services in its biennium budget, but the governor, according to Moser, rejected it.

“Counties can apply for the use of these state funds to establish local contracts with Wildlife Services to poison, trap and otherwise kill predatory animals, and those are usually defined as rodents, rabbits and mostly coyotes,” Moser says.

But the killing methods are broadly defined and so is the scope of what can be considered a predatory animal. “It’s quite wide-ranging and whatever is considered a nuisance animal,” Moser says.

A few months ago, the agency was targeting coyotes with an M44 cyanide device, which resulted in the killing of a wolf designated as OR-48.

“It just goes to show that Wildlife Services uses techniques that really affect also non-target animals. They’ve been known to kill dogs and they poisoned a child in Idaho recently,” she says. In March, a press release on the Idaho incident from Brooks Fahy of Predator Defense stated that a boy who handled a “cyanide bomb” was hospitalized and his dog died. A public hearing on the bill is slated for April 19.

On the climate change front, HB 2135 would protect Oregon by addressing greenhouse gas emissions and would also aid in green job creation, says Linda Kelly with 350 Eugene.

“It puts a cap on greenhouse pollution that would affect only the largest polluters in the state. It would not affect medium and small businesses,” she says. This type of legislation, called cap-and-trade, would also help Oregon’s economy by bringing in sustainable jobs. “This starts moving the whole economy away from fossil fuels and starts making alternative energy more viable, and it’s safer for the health of people,” she says.

HB 2135 has provisions that address industries “including agriculture, forestry, commercial fishing, recreation and tourism” that will be affected by climate change, ensuring that these jobs don’t leave the state, she says. On April 17 a work session was held suggesting the bill be passed but with amendments.

Kelly says California has a similar cap-and-trade policy, and in a new report, \$500 million in climate investments has helped successfully funded projects in disadvantaged communities.

350 Eugene also supports protecting Oregon from climate change inducing fossil fuel industries via HB 3344, which would prohibit “funding new bulk coal or oil terminals.” Public testimony on the bill was heard March 13, but currently there are no committee meetings or floor sessions scheduled.

Kelly says the terminal bill is “making it really hard to get any more oil terminals in Oregon.”

She adds the nonprofit also supports SB 958, which would require a balance test for crude oil transportation “that would look at what are the dangers versus possible benefits,” she says. A public hearing on the bill was held on April 13.

Kelly adds, “These are things that will insist upon more safety and raise the bar,” to prevent potential environmental disasters.

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