

# Washington: Issues over wolves, honeybees widen the divide

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Kennewick Rep. Brad Klippert and Spokane Valley Rep. Matt Shea both introduced bills this year to study carving out a 51st state on the Eastside.

Shea said he was taking up the challenge of liberal pundits who opine the poorer Eastside holds back the Westside's progressive agenda.

If set free, the Eastside, with its orchards, farms, ranches and minerals, would be economically strong, Shea said.

"Give us a chance to prove the naysayers wrong," he argues.

Klippert complains the Westside has imposed such issues as gay marriage, recreational marijuana and gun control on the Eastside. For him, the last straw was the Seattle City Council dropping Columbus Day in favor of Indigenous Peoples Day.

"I have nothing against indigenous people, but that's a rewriting of the history book," he said.

"We constantly have to live by their principles and values, and I'm tired of it, and so are a lot of people," Klippert said.

Neither Shea's bill nor Klippert's bill got a hearing.

Klippert said he won't give up. "I'll stand by this plan as long as I'm an elected official."

## Capital clout

The Eastside has clout in Olympia. Senate Majority Leader Mark Schoesler is a Ritzville farmer. But many state policies are determined by the governor and other statewide officeholders, elected Supreme Court justices or statewide ballot measures and initiatives promoted by Westside interests.

Adams County rancher Branden Spencer said Eastside legislators do well on issues particular to the region.

"But when it's one of those issues that involves both sides of the state, it's a lost cause for this side of the state," he said.

For example, the ban on using hounds to hunt cougars was passed by initiative in 1996. Since then, lawmakers have eased the ban, but only for limited times in a few places.

Klickitat County Rancher Neil Kayser said the hound ban is an example of a Westside policy "trickling over the hill (and) we have to deal with it."

"People on the Eastside are good stewards of the land, but we have to use the land," he said. "If we were poor stewards ... we wouldn't be

in business."

Kayser said he'd be for splitting the state.

"Don't get me wrong, there are good people on the Westside," he said. "We just have a different lifestyle and view on things."

## Howls of protest

Democratic Gov. Chris Gregoire, who didn't carry a single Eastside county in the historically close 2004 election, adopted the state-uniting slogan, "One Washington."

"What happened to that concept — One Washington — on the wolf issue?" asks Stevens County Commissioner Wes McCart. Ranchers in that northEastern Washington county have for years been dealing with wolf packs that attack their livestock.

McCart has pressed lawmakers to recognize that when it comes to wolves not all "stakeholders" have as much at stake.

"I think we have two categories of stakeholders: Those who want wolves and those who are living with wolves," he told a House committee in February.

In an interview, McCart said he wished people on the Westside would "take the time to put themselves in the shoes of other folks."

"I'd like for them to realize there's the desire and fantasy (about wolves) and then there's the reality. They're living the desire and fantasy, and we're living the reality," he said.

McCart has spoken in favor of taking a look at splitting the state. "It's unfortunate we would ever have to have that conversation," he said.

In 2005, a Senate committee held the last legislative hearing on dividing the state. The committee's chairman, a Puyallup Democrat, said he wouldn't move the bill along, but he wanted to give Eastside county commissioners a

chance to air their grievances.

"We may entertain this bill every year," said the chairman, Jim Kastama.

That didn't satisfy Spokane Republican Bob McCaslin. He said Eastside residents wanted a new state, not an annual hearing.

"We're about as serious as we can get about this bill," he said.

## 'Huge divide'

For Honeybee Awareness Day at the Capitol this month, Grant County beekeeper Tim Hiatt wore a tie, befitting someone on a business trip.

Hiatt is not a backyard beekeeper. He has 12,000 hives that pollinate California almonds in late winter before returning to Washington to pollinate tree fruit. His customers and neighbors are farmers. He's not joining the push to ban pesticides to save bees, a position that has support among some Westside beekeepers who don't provide pollinating services.

"For beekeepers, there's a huge divide between east and west," Hiatt said.

"I get frustrated with folks like the Sierra Club who want to clamp down on pesticide use," Hiatt said. "I guess it's a constant source of frustration. Those who want to restrict agriculture like to eat."

Branden Spencer, the Adams County rancher, said he felt the east-west divide in January at a meeting in Tumwater of the State Parks Commission.

The commission voted to charge agricultural producers to drive on state recreational trails that bisect their farms and ranches. Spencer has miles of trails crossing his land. Permits will come with conditions to prevent produc-

ers from getting in the way of hikers, cyclists and equestrians.

Spencer said parks commissioners didn't "grasp how desolate the area we live in is."

"It might as well be Egypt," he said.

## Historic splits

Before there was an east-west divide, there was a north-south divide, which was decisive in setting the Washington-Oregon border.

In 1851 and 1852, Oregon Territory residents north of the Columbia River held conventions to draw up a petition to ask Congress for their own territory. At the time the Oregon Territory included what would become the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and parts of Montana and Wyoming.

"The entire Legislative power is South of the Columbia River ... the South has no interest in common whatever with the North," the petition stated. "The Inhabitants North of the Columbia River receive no benefit or convenience whatever from the Territorial Government as now administered."

Northerners complained that reaching a judge took longer than traveling from Missouri to Massachusetts.

"There is now about three thousand souls North of the Columbia," according to the petition. "They have raised a large amount of produce, wheat, oats, potatoes, onions, etc. for exportation, but with the many abuses of their rights and neglected condition in their civil immunities as Citizens, it is impossible for them to prosper in commerce or advance one step in the improvement of Roads & Highways."

Congress granted the petition and in 1853 broke up

the Oregon Territory and formed the Washington Territory from the northern half. That settled the north-south divide. The east-west divide became an issue as Oregon sought to become a state.

A delegate to Oregon's constitutional convention in 1857, Charles Megis of Wasco County, proposed setting the boundary at the Cascades, freeing up the east to form its own state, according to a history posted on the Oregon Secretary of State's website.

Megis argued that it's a "fixed fact in political science, the great natural boundaries are to be observed." Invoking the image of a mythological demon, Megis said domination by the more populous Westside would be "hanging over us like an incubus."

Megis said it would be tough, but the east could stand on its own. "Our country... is bordering upon Indians; danger hangs over us, but we shall try to take care of ourselves."

The west wouldn't have it. A Western Oregon delegate and future U.S. senator, Delazon Smith, responded: "If we are hemmed in between these ranges of mountains here, with every acre of available lands appropriated what avail it, sir? Nothing! We are left to struggle as best we may."

## Stately ideas

Klippert's idea is to combine the Western halves of Washington and Oregon into one state and the Eastern halves into another state.

His legislation would have established a bi-state task force to study the economic and governmental implications of redrawing boundaries to unite regions that are described in the bill as "remarkably conspicuous."

Shea proposed appointing a task force to look at cutting

Washington in two, leaving Oregon out of it.

His bill's preamble was reminiscent of the settlers' 1852 appeal to Congress:

"Since statehood, the lifestyles, culture and economics of Eastern and Western Washington have been very distinct. The urbanization and rapid growth in the Western portions of Washington state have progressively heightened this divergence of cultural and economic values from that of the Eastern portions of the state."

Population growth played a defining role in Washington's history even before statehood.

By the time Washington became the 42nd state in 1889, the transcontinental railroad had bypassed Walla Walla, shutting down its growth. By a vote of the people, Olympia was picked as the state capital over Yakima and Ellensburg.

So it was to Olympia that ranchers went in February to talk about cougars.

The bill eventually died in the Senate, lost in the crush of other legislation.

Kayser's cousin, Keith Kreps, also a Klickitat County rancher, said he was sorely disappointed.

"They don't understand the wildlife issues we have," Kreps said. "They don't understand the economic loss. ... They wonder why we're squawking."

Kreps was quick to acknowledge that three Westside Democrats on the natural resources committee voted to recommend the Senate pass the bill. "My hat's off to them. They actually understand the economics we were talking about," he said.

Still, he made the drive over the Cascade Range for nothing.

His thoughts on splitting the state: "I'm all for it."

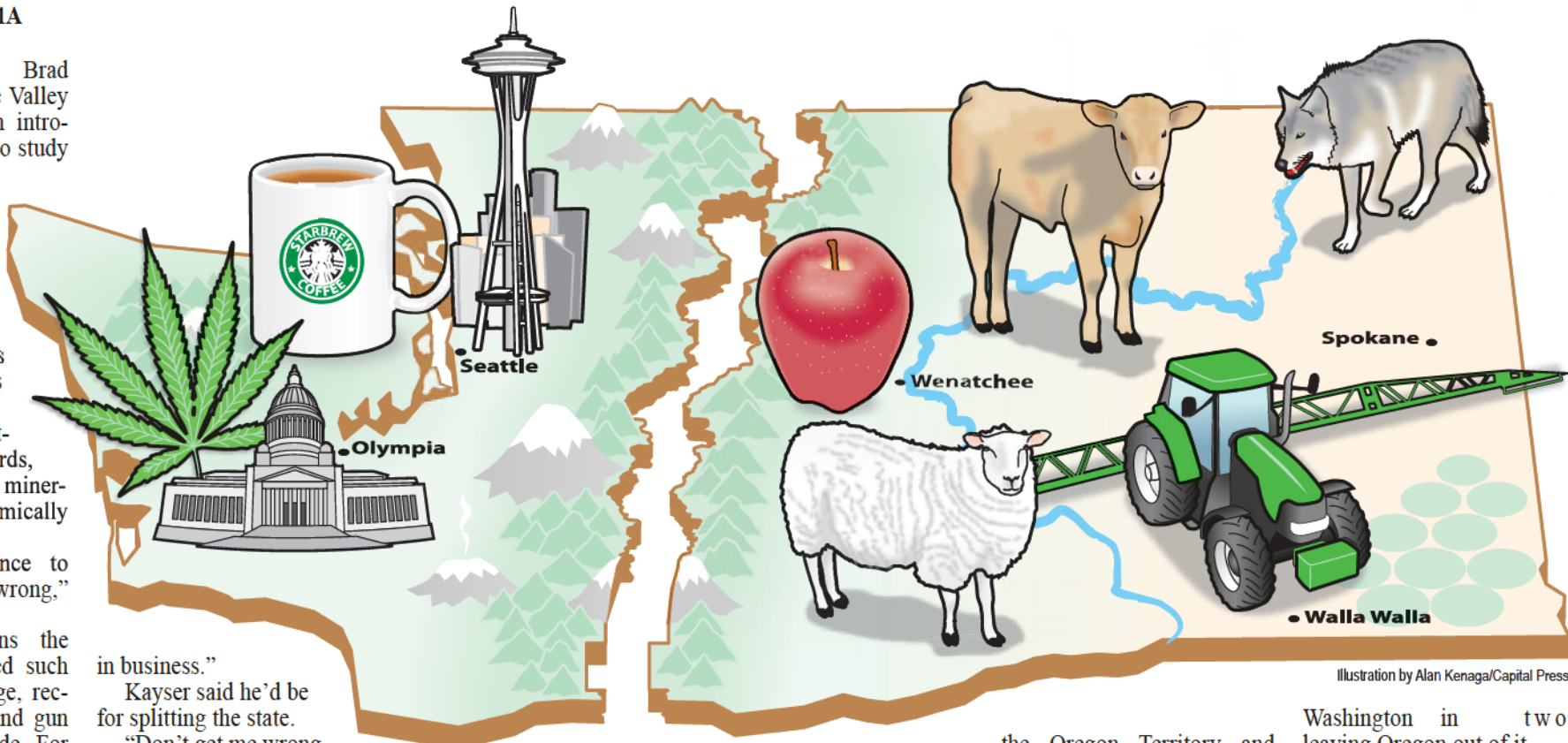


Illustration by Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

## Fishery: Many of the sardines are exported to Asia and Europe

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2012. The reasons are not well-understood, though it is widely accepted that huge swings in populations are natural, and generally are related to water temperatures.

Council member Frank Lockhart of NOAA Fisheries Service noted that several other fisheries — such as salmon, lingcod and rockfish — have recovered after going through steep declines.

Today, about 100 boats have permits to fish for sardines on the West Coast, about half the number during the heyday. Much of the catch, landed from Mexico to British Columbia, is exported to Asia and Europe, where some is canned, and the rest goes for bait.

West Coast landings have risen from a value of \$1.4 million in 1991 to a peak of \$21 million in 2012, but are again declining.

Geoff Shester, Califor-

nia campaign director for the conservation group Oceana, said this is the first shutdown of sardine fishing on the West Coast since the council began regulating harvests in 2000. He added the fishery should have been shut down years ago, when it first became clear more fish were being harvested than reproduced.

Shester said every ton of sardines left in the ocean is important as a food source for other wildlife and as a foundation for rebuilding the population.

The council allowed some sardines to be caught inadvertently in the course of related fisheries but reduced the amount. That means boats targeting anchovies, mackerel and herring won't have to stop fishing but could run up against limits in sardines caught that would shut them down, as well.

The council also allowed the Quinault tribe in Washington state to go ahead with a small sardine fishery.

## Insurance: State views the \$50 million deductible as its spending budget for Oregon's fire protection

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"He's talking with them because it is a major budgeting decision," Nichols said.

For several decades, the state has used money from forest landowners and the general fund to purchase a policy from Lloyd's, the London insurance market. Oregon is the only state in the nation to purchase a wildfire insurance policy. Severe wildfires in 2013 and 2014 caused the company to increase the cost of the policy this year.

Nichols said there is no hard deadline for the state to decide whether to purchase the policy, but state lawmakers must pass a budget by June 30.

This year, Lloyd's said it would issue a policy with \$25 million in coverage, which would kick in after the state spends at least \$50 million on wildfire suppression. The premium would be \$3.75 million. Last year, the state paid a premium of \$2 million and received \$25 million in coverage, after it had spent \$20 million on firefighting.

Nichols said it could raise questions for some people that the state would consider an insurance policy with a deductible twice the amount of



Courtesy Grant County Sheriff's Department

Lloyd's of London has offered the state wildfire insurance coverage with substantially higher premiums and deductibles.

the coverage, but the state's situation is different than many conventional purchasers such as an individual who buys homeowners insurance. That is because the state views the \$50 million de-

ductible as its spending budget for fire protection. Nichols said that during severe fire seasons, the insurance policy is a buffer that prevents firefighting costs from eating into the state general

fund and taking money away from other programs.

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