

# Fee hikes for hunting, fishing licenses could stall

## Task force could look at other options

By **CLAIRE WITHTYCOMBE**  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A task force charged with finding sustainable funding for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is considering holding off on scheduled license fee increases if the Legislature approves either an income tax surcharge or a surcharge on beverage containers to fund the department.

The department's biennial budget is about \$370 million. One-third comes from the federal government, another third from hunting and fishing licenses, and the remainder from state funding sources.

Last year, the Secretary of State's Office found that the department had persistent cash flow problems, noting that fee increases had not in the past been able to address the underlying causes of the budget shortfalls.

Either the proposed beverage container or income tax surcharge would be calculated to bring in what the task force has estimated is an additional \$86 million in needed revenue for the department — an

increase the task force recommended Tuesday from an earlier \$79.9 million estimate. The higher number takes into account the proposed rollback of fee increases.

There are two scheduled license fee increases — one in 2018 and another in 2020. In future years, the task force has proposed, the license fees would be indexed to inflation.

Part of the task force's work was to recognize the contributions hunters and anglers make to the department's conservation work. An exemption to the income tax surcharge for licenseholders was previously floated as a way to meet that goal.

Holding the line on fees

was determined to be more feasible.

The next meeting of the task force is scheduled for Nov. 28, when members will review a final draft of the report they will present to the Legislature during an interim session in mid-December.

The group also wants to get input from the beverage industry.

Either surcharge proposal has to be incorporated into legislation or approved by voters via a ballot measure in order to go into effect.

The *Capital Bureau* is a collaboration between *EO Media Group* and *Pamplin Media Group*.



Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Rick Swart fishes for coho on the Clackamas River in this file photo. A task force looking for ways to increase the state Department of Fish and Wildlife's budget is considering rolling back license fees if the Legislature passes either an income tax or beverage container surcharge.

## Audit: Some 'problem spots' remain at geology department

By **CLAIRE WITHTYCOMBE**  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Since its financial woes came under scrutiny in early 2015, the state's geology department has improved its financial controls, according to a state audit report released Wednesday.

But the Secretary of State's Office recommended the Department of Geology and Mineral Industries continue to update how it reports and records federal money.

The department, for its part, says all the recommended changes have been made or are in progress.

The department, which maps the state's geology and natural hazards and regulates mining and resource exploration, gets a decent chunk of its revenue every budget cycle from federal agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Geological Survey.

The department anticipates receiving \$6.8 million in federal funding in the current biennium, which ends in June. Its total estimated revenue in that period is about \$18.6 million, though the department expects that total will ultimately be higher due to unanticipated grant awards.

Auditors focused on financial controls pertaining to the department's federal revenues in fiscal years 2015 and 2016.

According to the secretary of state's audit report, the department didn't manage grants it received from the federal government properly.

Among other red flags, auditors took issue with the department's practice of drawing down federal funds before spending any money on the attendant project to help its cash flow, a practice the department has since ceased, according to department director Brad Avy.

Avy has been at the helm of the agency since December 2015.

Auditors also found the department inaccurately reported federal expenditures, which is also being addressed, according to a response Avy wrote to auditors that was also released Wednesday.

Auditors found that some of the department's "minor" expenditures may have been inappropriately charged to federal programs.

The department is now tracking federal expenditures in alignment with state policy, recording the indirect costs of projects and has developed a system for organizing contracts.

The department is still for-

## The department recently underwent review by FEMA.

malizing policies and procedures for reporting federal revenue and expenditures, a process it expects to be complete by the end of the year, according to Avy's letter.

The department is also working on updating its payroll practices; it stopped using paper time sheets earlier this year and now uses the Department of Administrative Services' e-payroll system.

In a statement Wednesday, the secretary of state's office said that "significant turnover" in leadership and fiscal staff at the department created "critical" financial challenges. New management, including Avy, who requested the audit, has helped make needed improvements, the secretary of state said.

The department recently underwent review by FEMA. According to the audit report, FEMA did not issue any findings pertinent to eight FEMA grants that the department received and managed. FEMA routinely audits agencies whose activities its funds support.

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## Gearhart's RV rules to get an overhaul

### Councilors seek to put teeth in rules

By **R.J. MARX**  
The Daily Astorian

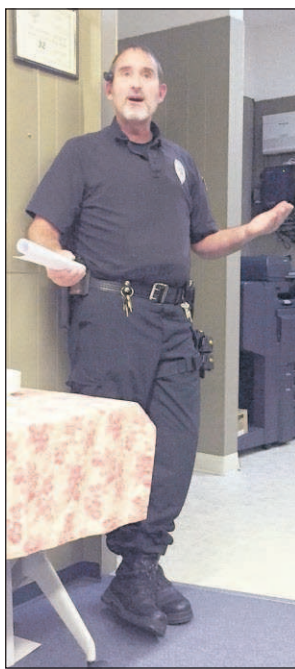
GEARHART — Police respond to reports of RVs and trailers parking illegally overnight on city streets and by the highway.

Gearhart's zoning code states sleeping in trailers is only allowed in licensed RV parks. But without changes to give teeth to the rules, enforcement is all but impossible.

"Even if they're in their sleeping bag, they're not going to get arrested," City Attorney Peter Watts said at Wednesday night's Gearhart City Council meeting.

Unless an RV owner verbally admits to sleeping in his vehicle, complaints lack force of law.

"Right now I walk up to them and ask, 'Are you using your RV for eating or sleep accommodations?' And they say 'no,'" Gearhart Police Chief Jeff Bowman said. "The violator can simply say



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian  
Gearhart Police Chief Jeff Bowman describes a growing problem of illegally parked trailers and RVs.

he isn't sleeping or eating in the RV."

The problem is growing, Bowman said, with trailers parking on city streets and along U.S. Highway 101. "They leave Seattle late at night, they get tired, they

pull off to the side of the road. We're not a Walmart parking lot," he said.

Regulation of RVs parked on private property is even more difficult.

"I'm not going to walk onto private property at 2 o'clock in the morning and knock on a motor home like I would if they're parked on the city right-of-way," Bowman said.

### 'Layered' discussion

After a public hearing this summer, the City Council asked the Planning Commission to consider zoning changes to allow "limited flexibility" in overnight use of RVs. The Planning Commission opted not to make a recommendation, City Administrator Chad Sweet said, and passed it back to the City Council without explanation.

The city's draft rules would allow Gearhart property owners to obtain permits allowing RV occupancy twice a year for up to 96 hours at a time. RVs would not be allowed to park in the public right-of-way and

permits could be revoked by the police chief.

A future council work session should determine "layers" of the discussion, and include public testimony, Councilor Paulina Cockrum said.

Future drafts will likely consider storage, parking and camping rules separately. "One ordinance is not going to fit all in the box," Cockrum said.

Councilors discussed options to provide flexibility to RV owners, a matter of concern for two residents.

"I believe if you have a spot on your property for an RV, you should be able to use it," Jim Schultz said. "We need to come to an agreement what to do with the trailers and what we can and can't do."

"I understand the code needs to have a bite so it holds up in court for a few people who have lived in their trailer," Tom Thies said. "But at what cost to the rest of the people who only use their trailer for camping and traveling?"

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SATURDAY  
NOVEMBER 5TH  
10AM TO 2PM  
LUNCH: 11AM - 1PM

Holiday Items

Crafts and Homemade Goodies

Blessing Blanket Giveaway

Warrenton United Methodist Church  
679 S. Main Street, Warrenton

## Fall Bazaar & Holiday Sale

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Proceeds from the sale will be used to support a variety of resident activities

## Happy Retirement!

David Green, a highly regarded salesperson with Englund Marine & Industrial Supply will retire after 13.5 years in the marine sales business. His last day will be Friday November 4, so please come in and say your farewells.

David, a lifelong Astoria resident, joined Englund Marine in 2003 after he spent thirty five years as a shipwright. One of many of the boats he helped build was the Sailing Gillnetter which is now displayed at the Maritime Museum. David was also involved with the Astoria Column restoration project in 1995 as he did the wood work and built both doors. His many contributions to the industry include remarkable knowledge and understanding of marine products, electronics, paints, and solvents.

Englund Marine, his coworkers, and customers have appreciated David's hard work, dedication, and expertise at Englund Marine. We wish him luck and good health as he moves on to enjoy greater and more leisurely pursuits.

## EPIC BOOK SIGNING

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3:00-5:00

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