

Psychedelic mushroom supporters push for legalization — with caveats

Issue could go on the 2020 ballot

By KRISTIAN FODEN-VENCIL
Oregon Public Broadcasting



Kristian Foden-Vencil/Oregon Public Broadcasting
Tom Eckert and his wife, Sheri, are the co-sponsors of the Psilocybin Service Initiative. They are in private practice together where they counsel couples and men who've been required to attend a domestic violence program.

The active ingredient of psychedelic mushrooms, psilocybin, has been listed as a Schedule I drug since the 1970s. That means the federal government thinks it has no medical application whatsoever — and high potential for abuse.

But Oregon's attorney general has approved language for a ballot measure which would make psilocybin legal if passed.

But what would that look like? How would people get the drug? And how would the state ensure it is used safely?

"Nobody's going to be taking psilocybin home with them to administer to themselves, which means that

there will be none in public, no one driving," said Tom Eckert, one of the leaders of a campaign to legalize psilocybin.

Eckert and his wife, Sheri, are the co-sponsors of the Psilocybin Service Initiative, a push to get legalization on the 2020 ballot.

The first thing they want voters to know is that they're not following the model of legalization used by cannabis proponents.

Tom Eckert, a therapist in Beaverton, said voters should realize what they're legalizing is "psilocybin-assisted therapy," rather than

wholesale access to the drug. "Many individuals want this service," said Sheri Eckert, also a therapist. "But they want to know that they're getting it from someone they can trust."

"Psychedelics are uniquely powerful when it comes to creating lasting change in the human being," Tom Eckert said.

It's a change many people swear by. Author Michael Pollan's new book looks at the science of psychedelic drugs. As part of his research, he attended an underground psilocybin therapy session with a facilitator and said he completely disconnected from his ego on the trip.

"The most amazing thing happened; I just kind of found my identity, my sense of self completely turned into post-its — little slips of paper that were being blown-around by the wind,"

Pollan recently told Oregon Public Broadcasting's "Think Out Loud." "But (I) had no desire to pile them back together again. I didn't fight it."

Tom Eckert said he wants Oregonians to have similar experiences, which is why he's seeking legalization for more than just treatment of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety.

Under the proposal the Eckerts are pushing, people seeking psilocybin treatments will need to be 21 or older and have medical clearance from a doctor. They would then be assigned a licensed facilitator.

"The facilitator kind of orients you to the service, asks some questions, gets to know you and your desires and your intentions and issues a bit more," Tom Eckert said.

When both facilitator and client are happy, they sched-

ule a session to take the drug. Tom Eckert says that would be at a licensed psilocybin facility, possibly a hospital or a small neighborhood clinic.

The client would drink a tea, eat mushrooms or take a synthetic version of the drug.

"You take the compound, and you generally lay down with headphones on and eye shades, and you listen to music that is previously curated to enhance the experience," Tom Eckert said. "It's just a very affirming thing."

If the client responds poorly to the drug, the facilitator would step in to ensure their safety. But Tom Eckert said he doesn't expect many problems.

"It's not a stimulant. It doesn't create a lot of activity. You generally become immersed in the experience," he said.

Washington Supreme Court to weigh whether Inslee's carbon cap is illegal

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — The Washington Supreme Court will hear arguments in March on whether Gov. Jay Inslee's Clean Air Rule was an illegal power grab by the executive branch.

The court also may consider whether the regulation would backfire and increase the global release of greenhouse gases.

Inslee, unable to pass climate-change legislation, directed the state Department of Ecology to develop the rule to cut carbon emissions.

Two food processors, a fertilizer maker and about four dozen other manufacturers would be required to cut carbon emissions or buy credits created by someone

else's reductions. Petroleum refineries and natural gas companies would have to buy the credits too because their products release carbon when used. The Department of Ecology estimates, broadly, the rule would cost businesses between \$445 million and \$6.7 billion over 20 years.

A Thurston County judge ruled Washington's Clean Air Act didn't give the Department of Ecology authority to regulate distributors of fossil-fuel products and tossed out the entire rule.

The Department of Ecology appealed directly to the Supreme Court, stating climate change was too pressing a matter to wait.

Now the high court has put the case on its calendar, and the parties are fil-

ing briefs.

The Department of Ecology defends the legality of the rule, and the environmental groups that have joined the lawsuit argue the court should broadly interpret the department's authority because climate change is a significant threat to every Washington resident.

The rule will increase the cost of making farm goods and other products. The business coalition, which includes the Northwest Food Processors Association as well as the Washington State Farm Bureau, claim that Washington companies will lose market share to out-of-state competitors. And the competitors are likely to be in places where manufacturers emit more greenhouse gases.

2 Puget Sound orcas predicted to die by summer

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Two more Puget Sound orcas are ailing and probably will be dead by summer, according to an expert on the critically endangered population of killer whales that live in the waters of the Pacific Northwest.

Drone photography taken this past September showed the ailing population of orcas known as the southern residents went into the winter thinner than they were when the whales arrived in the San Juan Islands last summer.

They also are thinner than Puget Sound's so-called northern resident population of killer whales, which have been steadily growing in population for the past 40 years in their home waters primarily in northern British Columbia and southeast Alaska, where they have access to more fish and cleaner and quieter water.

The northern residents gave birth to 10 new calves last year.

The Seattle Times reported that Center for Whale Research founding director Ken Balcomb said photos taken of a southern resident orca known as J17 on New Year's Eve showed the 42-year-old female has so-called peanut head — a misshapen head and neck caused by starvation. In addition, a 27-year-old male known as K25 is failing, also from lack of sufficient food. He lost his mother, K13, in 2017 and is not successfully foraging on his own.

Several southern resident whales were documented to be pregnant in September, but so far there has been no sign of babies. The southern residents have not had a successful pregnancy in three years.

The southern resident population is at a 35-year

low after three deaths in 2018. There are only 74 left.

Losing J17 would be a blow to the southern residents because she is a female still of reproducing age, said Deborah Giles, research scientist for University of Washington. Center for Conservation Biology.

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