

Oregon lawmaker’s bill would regulate hobby drones

By **TAYLOR W. ANDERSON**
The Bulletin

SALEM — If you’re planning to arm your hobby drone, your window is closing.

Oregon lawmakers are working to add to the state’s laws on the small, unmanned aerial systems, better known as drones, that have taken to skies across the country in numbers that have left lawmakers — and pilots — scrambling to create rules that limit their use.

Rep. John Huffman, R-The Dalles, has become Salem’s go-to on drones. He plans to bring a bill in the 2016 session that he hopes will address concerns about recreational pilots who fly their drones near wildfires, airports and other areas that have frightened commer-

cial pilots and at times prevented firefighting planes from dropping water or flame retardant at crucial times.

“The (Federal Aviation Administration) has gotten roughly 100 notifications from pilots this last year — from manned aircraft — that they have viewed or witnessed drones as they’ve been flying,” Huffman said.

Huffman has for three years spearheaded a drone work group that is rounding out state rules and regulations that will govern the skies while the federal government figures out how it will address a growing demand for the small, remote-operated aircraft.

He and a wide group of civil liberties advocates, business leaders and state agency officials worked

in 2012 and 2013 to limit how law enforcement agencies could use drones. House Bill 2710, which passed widely in 2013, requires police to get a warrant if they’re using a drone to gather information in a case, unless the agency has probable cause and believed time was a crucial factor in solving a case.

“A part of that bill was that law enforcement and government agencies could not weaponize drones,” Huffman said. “In that bill we didn’t address recreational or hobby drones at all.”

The bill instead focused on what are called public drones, any drone used by a government entity, and required any public body that uses them to register the flier with the state Department of Aviation

starting Jan. 2, 2016.

The bill also stripped from local governments the authority to pass rules or ordinances regarding drones, leaving that power solely to the Legislature.

The drone work group is now taking aim at private recreational and commercial drones, the machines that are often mounted with a camera that anyone can buy online or in a store without needing a license or permission.

The ACLU of Oregon, which was early to propose restrictions on the use of drones in policing, has continued looking for ways to ensure there are no privacy loopholes in the 2013 law. The group fears law enforcement could seek to get information from agencies that aren’t required to follow the 2013

warrant restrictions — like the Department of Forestry — unless rules against information sharing are spelled out in state law.

The proposal the drone work group will present probably would restrict recreational drone pilots from flying around sensitive spaces, like chemical factories, dams or prisons, Huffman said.

It would also likely restrict flying near wildfires. Hobby pilots have made headlines in recent years, as some have flown camera-mounted drones above wildfires, hampering key air support for wildfires.

Huffman added that his drone bill, which will be one of his two allowed during the 35-day legislative session that begins Feb. 1, will be vetted and ready to pass despite the short timeline.

BUSINESS: Santa will make an appearance downtown

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said.

Pedro said in the rush to find deals in the Tri-Cities or online, people often overlook great opportunities in their own back yard.

“What we really hope is that people stay here to shop for the holidays, because we’ve got so much to offer,” she said.

Small Business Saturday started in 2010 when American Express launched a campaign encouraging its card-holders to support small businesses the day after hitting up the big-box stores on Black Friday. The movement has grown over the last few years, and Pedro said the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce decided to jump on board.

“It’s exciting to know our business owners are looking forward to it,” she said.

Some local small businesses are running special deals on Saturday in order to reward loyal customers and attract new ones.

Amber Powell, owner of Bare Necessities, said on Saturday she is going to hide candy canes around the boutique with discounts of up to 50 percent. Customers can come in and enjoy a cup of hot chocolate while they look for a candy cane coupon.

“You could almost call it a hot cocoa social,” she said.

Bare Necessities is a resale store that buys gently used maternity and children’s clothing from local residents and resells them at a more affordable price than buying brand new, so Powell said encouraging people to shop local fits in with the store’s mission.

She said for small business owners like herself, every customer and every purchase makes a measurable difference.

“As a small business owner, the way my kids get



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Amber Powell, owner of Bare Necessities, laughs at her son, Joshua, 1, as he rides a hobby horse at her shop Wednesday in Hermiston.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Stephanie Jones of Hermiston and her sister, Megan Daves of Bakersfield, Calif., shop for children’s clothes on Thursday at Bare Necessities in Hermiston.

fed is by customers coming in and buying,” she said.

On Saturday Bloomz Floral & Boutique is also offering deals in celebration of Small Business Saturday. Santa will be making an appearance downtown that day, and everything in the store will be 20 percent off.

Owner Rodney Zumwalt said this is his family’s first holiday season as small business owners. But looking at

the numbers provided by the shop’s last owner, combined with the fact that Bloomz has expanded its selection and advertising budget, Zumwalt said they’re preparing for a busy Christmas season.

“This is our first rodeo,” he said.

He said he thought Small Business Saturday was a great way to remind people to check out the deals they can find right in their hometown.

“People go to the mall for the atmosphere, and they can shop at more stores. I get it,” he said. “But hopefully this will get more attention here.”

Small Business Saturday applies to all local small businesses, not just the ones on Main Street, but for downtown businesses a second chance at attracting customers will come on Dec. 3, when the Hermiston Downtown Association is hosting the final First Thursday event of the year.

On that night businesses will offer later hours, special discounts, refreshments and live entertainment to entice customers downtown. December’s First Thursday will also feature a tree lighting ceremony at 6 p.m. and the unveiling of the city of Hermiston’s new light display choreographed to music on the former RoeMark’s building at the corner of Northeast Second Street and East Main.

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Staff photo by Sean Hart
Volunteers serve free Thanksgiving meals Thursday during the Community Fellowship Dinner at the Hermiston Senior Center. Coordinator Laurie Ball-Kiser said 300 people volunteered to help for the meal, at which 30 turkeys were cooked and served.

VOLUNTEER: ‘I couldn’t imagine doing anything else’

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since.

“I enjoy it,” he said. “When you’re not busy serving food, you can talk to people. I get a lot of interesting stories.”

Through the years, Furches said he has met a Vietnam veteran who talked about his war experience and another veteran who had to have a limb amputated after in injury in Iraq.

Hermiston veteran Dave Bosley was sitting at a table this year, enjoying his first Community Fellowship Dinner.

“I thought I’d come and see what the community is all about,” he said, and added he planned to be back next year.

Across the room, Tri-Cities resident Luann Harle was dining with her mother, Leona Harpster, a Hermiston resident who attends every year.

“This is one of the most wonderful things could happen,” Harpster said. “The meal was wonderful, and I make so many friends here.”

Harle said it was her first

time attending and she was glad she came. She said the food was excellent.

First-time volunteer Morgan Winchester, 16, of Stanfield, waited tables. Her aunt thought it would be a good idea to serve others in order to be more thankful for what they have, Winchester said.

“I would definitely come back and do this again,” she said. “To see all these people smile was a great experience.”

At the dessert table, serving apple and pumpkin pie and cupcakes, 23-year-old Nathaniel Scott said his family had been volunteering on Thanksgiving since they first moved to Hermiston eleven years prior. He said he plans to move to Portland soon and hopes he will be able to find a similar place to volunteer for the holidays.

“It’s really nice, because you get to connect with other members of the community,” he said. “I couldn’t imagine doing anything else.”

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Earthquake rumbles off coast

COOS BAY (AP) — A moderate earthquake has struck off the coast of southern Oregon.

The U.S. Geological Survey says the magnitude 4.4 temblor struck at 11:36 p.m. Wednesday and was centered about 170 miles west of Coos Bay and six miles beneath the seabed.

The Coos County Sheriff’s office says it isn’t aware of any problems associated with the quake.

Tests suggest Oregon crabbing could re-open

MEDFORD (AP) — Authorities say the levels of harmful domoic acid that closed South Coast crab fisheries are now falling, and crabbers could return within weeks.

All eyes are on Monday’s results of Dungeness samples taken last weekend for Brookings and Port Orford to see whether they’ve dropped below health-alert levels, as they did in Coos and Winchester bays, or remain potentially unhealthy, as ports in Northern California are seeing.

The Meford Mail Tribune reports that if the results are good, sport-crabbers could be back on South Coast bays in less than two weeks. Oregon’s commercial

crabbing fleet could set out Dec. 15.

Sport crabbing in the area has been closed since Nov. 13 and the commercial season set to start Dec. 1 already has been delayed.

Domestic violence offers volunteer training

HERMISTON — Training classes that address such topics as understanding the dynamics of domestic violence, protective orders, stalking and reporting requirements are offered in Hermiston.

The sessions, which prepare people to volunteer for Domestic Violence Services, start Monday from 6-9 p.m. at the DVS Advocacy Office, 240 S.E.

Second St., Hermiston. The classes, which run Monday, Wednesday and Fridays through Dec. 18, prepare people to answer calls on the

24-hour crisis line.

For more information, including the dates and times of each session, call 541-276-3322.



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