

Legislature supports move to permanent daylight saving time

By MARK MILLER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon took a step toward moving to year-round daylight saving time on Thursday, as the state Senate overwhelmingly passed legislation that could stop the changing of the clocks for most Oregonians.

Like 47 other states, Oregon “springs forward” by an hour every March, then “falls back” to standard time every November. If Senate Bill 320 becomes law, all but one of Oregon’s 36 counties would spring forward and never fall back — but only if Congress approves the time change and neighboring Washington and California also adopt daylight time on a permanent basis.

The Senate voted 23-4 in favor of SB 320. Both the support and opposition were bipartisan, with two Democrats and two Republicans voting no.

“People are sick of the switch,” Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, the bill’s chief sponsor, said.

Sen. Jeff Golden, D-Ashland, said he hears the same. “My constituents in significant, not huge, numbers have been pretty united in wanting to end the time change,” Golden said. “Not united in which way we should go, but just, ‘Please, can we stop switching twice a year?’”

Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton, opposed the bill. A physician at Oregon Health & Science University Hospital, Steiner Hayward acknowledged that there is a documented uptick in health problems after time changes.

“For years, I’ve hoped that we can find one time and stick with it,” Steiner Hayward said.

However, Steiner Hayward said she is concerned about the effect that staying on daylight time in the winter months would have on religious observances.

In Judaism, the daily morning prayer is typically held shortly after sunrise. In early January, the sun would not rise until nearly 9 a.m. in western Oregon if the state abandons standard time in favor of year-round daylight time. Steiner Hayward said the lateness of the sunrise “will significantly impede the ability of people to participate in group prayer and make it to work on time.”

Sen. Alan Olsen, R-Canby, objected to the removal of a provision in the original version of SB 320 that would have referred the question to voters next November.

“The fact that we are taking it upon ourselves to make this change is rather interesting when we affect four million people by doing this, without the discus-

sion of four million people,” Olsen said. “This should go to the people.”

Sens. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, and Bill Hansell, R-Athena, were the other two opponents. Johnson said she was convinced by Steiner Hayward’s argument while Hansell agreed with Olsen.

Sen. Sara Gelser, D-Corvallis, voted yes on the floor but said she wants to see the bill amended in the House to put Oregon on standard time year-round instead of daylight time, which is one hour ahead of Pacific Time.

All of Oregon is on Pacific Time except for Malheur County, which is on Mountain Time. Even if SB 320 takes effect, Malheur County would continue to switch between daylight time and standard time, staying on the same clock as nearby Boise, Idaho.

California residents approved a proposition last year allowing the Legislature to move the state to year-round daylight time. In Washington, bills similar to the one approved by the Senate on Thursday have been speeding through the Capitol.

The premier of British Columbia has also expressed interest in moving to year-round daylight time to match the time zone of the West Coast states.

President Donald Trump and several key members of Congress, including Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., favor year-round daylight time.

In Oregon, Gov. Kate Brown supports the idea.

“I would like us to take a moment to recognize that our governor, Kate Brown, and our president, Donald Trump, agree on something,” Thatcher said on the Senate floor Thursday, to laughter.

Asked about SB 320 this week, House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, said she supports ending the biannual time switch, although she would prefer to remain on standard time year-round.

Daylight saving time was instituted in the United States in 1918. The concept came in and out of vogue over the next half-century, being observed in some states and cities but not others, until Congress in 1966 established daylight time nationwide for about six months out of the year. The period in which daylight time is in effect has lengthened over time, most recently being extended to eight months — from March to November — starting in 2007.

Reporter Mark Miller: mmiller@fgnewstimes.com. Miller works for the Oregon Capital Bureau, a collaboration of EO Media Group, Pamplin Media Group, and Salem Reporter.

Democrats meeting to include reorganization

PENDLETON — An important reorganizational meeting will be held on Monday during the regular meeting of the Democratic Party of Umatilla County. The meeting

begins at 6 p.m. in the community room at Pendleton City Hall, 501 S.W. Emigrant Ave.

For more information, contact Mark Peterson at 541-377-0891.

Biologists: Killings of hungry sea lions saving imperiled fish

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — A plan to kill California sea lions to save an endangered run of fish on a river that cuts through Portland appears to be working just months after wildlife officials began euthanizing the giant marine mammals, biologists said Thursday.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife began killing the sea lions in January after getting permission from federal authorities late last year. They have killed 16 so far, including three on Wednesday, said department spokeswoman Michelle Dennehy.

In the same period, 2,400 steelhead fish have reached the upper Willamette River and its tributaries to spawn this spring — the most in three years and double last year’s tally, the agency said.

Less than 30 years ago, the number of steelhead making that journey was at least 15,000 a year but pollution and the construction of dams on key rivers reduced that number dramatically.

Sea lions have been



AP Photo/Don Ryan, File
In this March 14, 2018, file photo, a California sea lion designated #U253 heads toward the Pacific Ocean after being released in Newport.

eating an additional 25% of all returning steelhead at that spot in the Willamette River south of Portland, said Shaun Clements, ODFW’s senior policy analyst.

“We’ve definitely been able to reduce predation this year and provide some relief to the fish,” he said. “We’re saving considerable numbers of them.”

Clements added that other factors, such as better conditions in the Pacific Ocean, are also contributing to larger numbers of steelhead making it over the falls this year.

After a weeklong lull, state biologists are now killing a second wave of sea lions that have traveled to the base of the falls to munch on another salmonid species,

the spring chinook.

The spring chinook run is also listed under the Endangered Species Act and biologists estimate sea lions are eating up to 9% of the returning adults each spring, Clements said. Up to 40 sea lions are preying on the chinook, he said, while only 12 were going after the steelhead.

The adult male sea lions, which weigh nearly 1,000 pounds each, have learned that they can loiter under Willamette Falls, a horse-shoe-shaped waterfall south of Portland, and snack on the vulnerable steelhead and salmon as the fish power their way upriver to the streams where they hatched.

Steelhead start life as freshwater trout and then travel to sea from inland

ivers, grow to adulthood as steelhead in the Pacific Ocean and then return to their natal river to spawn. They can grow to 55 pounds and live up to 11 years.

The sea lions breed each summer off Southern California and northern Mexico, then the males cruise up the Pacific Coast to forage. Hunted for their thick fur, the mammals’ numbers dropped dramatically but have rebounded from 30,000 in the late 1960s to about 300,000 today because of the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act.

With their numbers growing, the dog-faced sea lions are venturing ever farther inland up the Columbia River and its tributaries in Oregon and Washington. The two states have had a similar program in place for years to kill California sea lions that eat threatened and endangered salmon at the Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River.

The latest permit from the National Marine Fisheries Service says the targeted sea lions must have been observed eating at least one steelhead near Willamette Falls between Nov. 1 and Aug. 15 or have been observed in the same stretch of river on two consecutive days in that period.

Water, sewer rate increases to pay for capital projects

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Capital improvements to Hermiston’s water and sewer systems are moving forward as the weather warms up, but the improvements come with a price — literally.

In March, the city’s increased utility rates kicked in, prompting complaints on social media and to city hall from residents on a tight budget who weren’t expecting to see as much as \$40 a month added to their bill. Jerald Carlson, a Hermiston resident, wrote to the *East Oregonian* that his bill had increased by 50 percent.

The rate restructure for water and sewer was voted in during the Oct. 8 city council meeting.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said he’s been getting phone calls asking why rates went up, and he has explained that the city had been “undercharging” for water and sewer since it opened a new wastewater treatment plant in 2014. The result was that so much of the city’s water and sewer budget was going toward paying off the debt for the plant that “we didn’t have any money at all” for needed improvements to the rest of the system.

“Nobody likes to see their rates increase, but costs continue to rise,” he said.

Now that the city has additional revenue flowing in it has gotten started on projects, such as tearing up Southeast Seventh Street between Main Street and Newport Avenue to replace 650 feet of sewer line. The city began work last week and



Staff photo by Jade McDowell
Southeast Seventh Street is closed as crews work to install a new, larger sewer line to serve the south side of town.

the project is expected to take 45 to 60 days.

The previous 8-inch sewer line there was too small to support continued development on the south side of town, according to the city, and had resulted in crews installing a temporary bypass system during the Umatilla County Fair each year.

Other upcoming projects include new pumps and lift stations, replacing the computer system that runs Hermiston’s water and sewer and replacing what Morgan called the “Swiss cheese pipes” built in the 1920s.

One water project not paid for by the rate increase is a new water tower that the city plans to break ground on April 18 at noon at the corner of Punkin Center and Northeast 10th Street. The public is invited to the event.

The tower and 2 miles of water mains surrounding it will be paid for completely by payments in lieu of taxes by Lamb Weston, which is undertaking a major expansion outside Hermiston.

base charge of \$35 a month for sewer service plus \$3 for each 1,000 gallons of use. Previously customers paid a \$27.25 per month flat fee.

Since the city does not have meters to measure customers’ wastewater output, usage is based on an average of the customer’s December, January and February water usage when all of their water is presumably going down the drain and into the city’s sewer system instead of into their lawn. Each March, the city will recalculate the customer’s sewer bill based on the most recent winter, meaning the sewer rate customers saw on their March bill is the one they will be paying for the next 12 months.

Water users now pay a base charge of \$30 per month, plus 50 cents per 1,000 gallons up to 15,000 gallons and \$3.50 per 1,000 gallons thereafter. Mor-

gan said the large increase in price for gallons above the 15,000 gallon threshold means residents’ water bills will go up by a larger percentage some months than others.

In a chart comparing the old rates and new rates for an “average” single family home with yard, for example, a customer using 3,850 gallons in January would pay \$21.10 under the old rates and \$31.93 now. But if watering their lawn in July pushes them up to 33,775 gallons, their bill will jump from \$60.79 last year to \$103.21 this year.

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