

Pot might be state's top crop

By Eric Mortenson
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Sales and tax figures collected by state agencies may finally solve one of Oregon's long-running farm crop questions: whether marijuana is indeed the state's most valuable crop, as cannabis advocates have always maintained.

Tight controls and reporting requirements by the Oregon Department of Revenue and Oregon Liquor Control Commission should result in accurate information about pot, said Bruce Pokarney, spokesman for the state Department of Agriculture. The department compiles an annual list of the state's most valuable crops.

The temporary sale of recreational marijuana by medical marijuana dispensaries became legal in Oregon last October. Dispensaries charge a 25 percent tax on sales. When licensed recreational retailers begin operating in January the state tax will be 17 percent.

The information, however, poses another head-scratcher. Most agricultural statistics published by the ag department come from the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, or NASS. Although it's now legal in several states, the feds still classify marijuana as an illegal drug. Dave Losh, Oregon state statistician for NASS, said the agency won't include marijuana in its annual crop statistics due to federal policy.

For the same reason, people can't use water from federal projects to irrigate marijuana, he said, and such things as Natural Resources Conservation Service programs can't be applied to pot crops.

Pokarney, of ODA, joked the department might have to put an asterisk beside the pot crop value in its annual report. "We will have sales numbers, but I don't know how we would report it," he said.

Oregon crop statistics from 2014 list cattle and calves as the state's top agricultural product, at \$922 million value. Greenhouse and nursery plants was second at \$829 million, and hay was third, at \$703 million.

Seth Crawford, an Oregon State University sociology professor who teaches a pot policy class, estimated in 2015 that Oregon's marijuana crop had an annual value approaching \$1 billion.

Meanwhile, the OLCC continues to process license applications as entrepreneurs seek opportunities in the state's recreational cannabis market.

As of June 21, there were 723 applications to grow pot in Oregon. Of those, 122 were in Jackson County and 91 were in neighboring Josephine County. Southern Oregon has long been the state's cannabis production hotbed, legal or illegal. The tri-county Portland area, including Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties, accounted for 250 of the license applications.

Chamber tram party crammed with business announcements

Winter Fishtrap, 'Shake the Lake' and 'Music on the Mountain' announced

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

The 4th annual Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce "Party at the Tram" was held June 22, with approximately 120 attendees riding the gondolas up to the Summit Grill on Mount Howard.

The event was loud with conversation and wide with smiles. The party is a chance for business owners and their employees to enjoy themselves, network and hear some great music — supplied this year by the Janis Carper and Carolyn Lochert duo "Jezzebel's Mother." The money raised through ticket sales is used for marketing in the state Tri-Cities and other locations outside the county.

"We do everything for our tourists," said Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce Director Vicki Searles, "This is when we have an evening for ourselves."

Wallowa Lake Tramway owners Mike Lockhart and Bill Whittemore hosted the party with Terminal Gravity co-hosting this year and supplying the brews.

After thanking everyone who helped make the event possible, Lockhart announced that thanks to the work of Carper and The Music Alliance there would be "Music on the Mountain" featuring local talent at Summit Grill from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. every day through the summer.

Shannon McNerney, executive director of Fishtrap, was invited up to announce the return of Winter Fishtrap in February 2017 with a theme



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Business owners and employees gather and enjoy an evening at the Summit Grill on the top of Mount Howard.



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Mike Lockhart welcomes the crowd of business owners and their employees to the 4th Chamber After Hours Social Tram Party.

of "Who Owns the West?" The event is planned to bring writers and thinkers from all over Oregon and will be held at the Josephy Center. Announcements will be sent to university writing programs throughout the region.

But Fishtrap is not just for writers in programs or with academic credentials. It's for everyone, and especially for Wallowa County residents.

"Within five years I want to have everyone in Wallowa County to have a relationship with Fishtrap," McNerney said. "There's a place for everyone at Fishtrap — everyone has a story to tell."

Winter Fishtrap is more of thoughtful presentation of book-worthy ideas and subjects that will spark discussion than a writer's workshop — although there will be breakout sessions where writers can work with their notes on the subject. Speakers have

not been finalized, so feel free to contact Fishtrap at Christian@fishtrap.org with your suggestions.

Look for a whimsical Fishtrap parade entry at the Chief Joseph Days Parade as well.

Searles also announced that the "Shake the Lake" fireworks event, again to be managed by Bruce Lawson of Homeland Fireworks, was still not fully funded.

"This is for our friends and

family and not just the tourists," she said.

A coffee can was passed for donations, resulting in another \$350 toward the \$12,000 goal — there remains just over \$6,000 to go. Send your donations to the

Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 427, Enterprise, OR 97828 or drop by the office in the Tomas building, 309 S. River St.

Contributors of \$25 or more are entered into a drawing for a jet boat trip for two on the Snake River, provided by Hells Canyon Adventures.

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For public transportation ~ call to make a reservation 541-426-3840
- Tuesday & Thursday Shopping Bus** provides transportation for shopping and errands throughout Wallowa County ~ Cost \$3 from Wallowa/Joseph, \$2 Enterprise only.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION OF WALLOWA COUNTY

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JULY Sat. 2 / Sun. 3 / Mon. 4
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PANCAKE FEED ANNUAL FUND-RAISER

The Chieftain office will be **CLOSED Monday, July 4** for Independence Day.

EARLY DEADLINE

To reserve space in our **July 6th edition**, the deadline is **5pm Thursday, June 30**

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