



Playground build soon

Volunteers from across the county will have the opportunity to come together in a positive community experience. The build of the much-anticipated Joseph City Playground begins April 25 and continues through April 30, culminating with an opening ceremony at 5 p.m. That ceremony will be an all-ages party, with children exploring the playground and all celebrating with food, drink and music. More than 500 volunteers are needed for this six-day project. No construction experience is required. The Play By Design team will

oversee the entire build. Materials, tools, meals and childcare will all be provided to volunteers. The project's origins happened two years ago. In Laurie Altringer's community service class at Joseph Charter School, students Steven Beckman, T. J. Grote, Tyler Homan, Kade Kilgore and Trey Wandschneider determined that a new playground was needed. They believed the playground would provide children countywide with a happy and healthy place to play. They also asserted that the project could unite the com-

munity. City Council agreed and very quickly the seeds these five young men planted grew into a steering committee of over a dozen students and adults who have worked diligently to see the project brought to life. They soon won the support of organizations such as: The Oregon Parks & Recreation Dept. Local Government Grant Program, Wildhorse Foundation, Cycle Oregon, Oregon Community Foundation, and Northwest Farm Credit Services. The 6,500 square foot playground, designed by Play

by Design, will provide children of all ages and abilities with a place for active, creative play in a natural setting. Based on input from community members as young as six, the play area will include a variety of swings, slides, playhouses and a bouldering field and splash pad for hot summer days. Each day of the building event will have three construction shifts - 8-noon, 12:30-4:30 p.m. and 5-8:30 p.m. Learn more about the project and sign up for a volunteer shift by visiting josephplayground.org.



Capital Bureau file photo
Proposed legislation would create Independent Science Review Board to study controversial issues. Natural resources groups, while commending SB 198's noble aim, are nonetheless skeptical of how the review process would play out in reality.

Natural resource groups skeptical of science review panel proposal

By **Mateusz Perkowski**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A bill before Oregon lawmakers has raised a philosophical question: Is it possible to achieve an unbiased scientific opinion? Or more precisely, is a politically appointed scientific panel capable of reaching such an impartial truth? Legislators recently pondered this problem while deliberating Senate Bill 198, which would create an Independent Science Review Board to ponder some of the thornier controversies facing state regulators. Oregon's farmers and ranchers are no strangers to science-related disputes over wolves, pesticides and genetically engineered crops, among others. Natural resources groups, while commending SB 198's noble aim, are nonetheless skeptical of how the review process would play out in reality. State agencies that make "high impact" decisions affecting natural resource industries are already overseen by boards and commissions, said Mike Freese, vice president of Associated Oregon Industries, who testified at a Feb. 22 hearing before the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee. "Simply having the same debate in front of a new board doesn't make a lot of sense to me," said Freese, who testified on behalf of AOI and other groups, including the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Forest Industries Council and Oregon Dairy Farmers Association. Under SB 198, the Independent Scientific Review Board would be appointed by Oregon's governor, just like the commissions overseeing state agencies. The governor would also hire an administrator for an Oregon State University "secretariat" to assist the board with its work. The current version of the legislation doesn't adequately ensure the Independent Science Review Board would be free of political influence, Freese said. As a result, the new panel would become another venue for advocacy groups to seek a stamp of approval for their policy positions in "age-old debates," he said. Natural resources indus-

tries are concerned about perceived biases not only in panel's conclusions, but also in the type of questions that it decides to pursue, Freese said. Sen. Alan Olsen, R-Canby, said he hopes the Independent Science Review Board would provide clear, transparent information to help lawmakers make decisions involving multiple agencies or scientific disciplines. Lawmakers would ideally present scientific questions for the panel a year before the pertinent legislation is introduced, he said. It's currently difficult for legislators to decide whose experts to listen to, said Sen. Herman Baertschiger, R-Grants Pass. "We've got peer reviewed science on both sides." Sen. Arnie Roblan, D-Cos Bay, said he's "seen belief trump science repeatedly" in the Legislature and noted that advocates often bring in their own scientists to discount opposing views. "It puts the panel right in the middle of the most contentious issues we have in the state," Roblan said. The current language of SB 198 has raised some concerns among task force members who recommended the Independent Science Review Board's creation. While the task force generally supports the bill, the administrator overseeing the panel's "secretariat" would be more insulated from political influence if appointed directly by panel members, rather than the governor, said Dan Edge, associate dean of OSU's College of Agricultural Science. The task force is also troubled by the possibility that SB 198 would allow the Independent Science Review Board to be funded with grants and donations, said Edge. It'd be preferable for the panel's money to come from the state general fund, to avoid the perception that large donors can steer the review process, he said. "We're very concerned we might end up in a 'pay to play' situation," Edge said. Roblan said he'd "love to spend money on science," but that realistically, state spending on existing natural resource programs is already constrained.

Ranchers oppose cuts to wolf compensation

Budget proposals for ODA curtail predator programs

By **Mateusz Perkowski**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Ranchers who suffer livestock losses from predators stand to lose state support under both budget scenarios currently proposed for the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Funding aimed at predator control and compensation for livestock depredation would be cut under recommendations from Gov. Kate Brown as well as the co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, Sen. Richard Devlin, D-Tualatin, and Rep. Nancy Nathanson, D-Eugene. The proposed cuts drew objections from the livestock industry during a Feb. 22 hearing on ODA's budget before a panel of Joint Ways and Means Committee members focused on natural resources. As the wolf population has grown in Oregon, livestock losses have been a continuing source of frustration for ranchers, said Mike Durgan of the Baker County Wolf Compensation Advisory Committee. Even when wolves don't kill cattle, they cause health problems that are considered indirect losses and aren't compensated with state dollars, Durgan said. Until wildlife officials find a better way to manage the predators, the livestock industry should receive state assistance, he said. "I want to make it clear I'm not advocating killing wolves today." Oregon counties have steadfastly contributed money to their partnership with ODA and USDA's Wildlife Services division to pay for predator control, even as they've fallen short of funds for public safety and other vital services, said Craig Pope, a Polk County commissioner. "We will have no one else to call if we let this partnership fail," Pope said. "Counties cannot make up the difference of this funding hole." The Oregon Hunters Association and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation testified in favor of restoring




Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife


Two adult wolves from the Walla Walla Pack were caught on remote trail camera Jan. 16, 2016 in northern Umatilla County, Ore. Oregon legislators are considering reductions in funding for predator control and reimbursing ranchers for livestock losses.

the state's full contribution to the predator control program, which they say is necessary to maintain a balance between predators and deer and elk. Under Gov. Kate Brown's recommended 2017-2019 budget, the ODA would eliminate \$460,000 in state funding for the USDA's Wildlife Services division, which kills problematic predators. An ODA program that compensates ranchers for wolf depredation would be funded at \$211,000 under the governor's proposal, compared to \$233,000 in the 2015-2017 biennium. The co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, meanwhile, have proposed a "budget framework" for the upcoming biennium that would decrease funding for the wolf compensation program "and/or reduce funding for predator control." While the co-chairs' budget framework doesn't specify the exact reductions for ODA programs, it does propose cutting state funding for

all natural resource agencies to \$405 million, down from \$413.6 million during the previous biennium. Rep. Lew Frederick, D-Portland, said he's concerned about livestock losses and supports continued assistance from the state but raised concerns about possible hunting of wolves. While wolves aren't currently hunted in Oregon, controlled hunts could be allowed during a later phase of wolf recovery under the state's management plan for the species. Frederick cautioned against the display of "trophy" wolves killed by hunters, which he said would erode public support for the predator control and wolf compensation programs. "That's a political situation that will shut down a

great deal," he said. Aside from predator control, other ODA programs are on the chopping block under the proposals from Brown and the co-chairs of the Joint Ways & Means Committee. A coalition of natural resource industry groups — including the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Association of Nurseries, Oregon Cattle-men's Association and others — urged lawmakers not to curtail those programs. For example, the co-chairs' budget framework recommends decreasing the number of positions in ODA's agricultural water quality program and shifting food safety and pesticide programs from the general fund to program fees. Industry representatives fear such shifts will effectively increase fees on farmers, ranchers and others. Under Brown's budget proposal, about \$250,000 in general fund dollars would be cut from ODA's inspection program for "confined animal feeding operations," shifting the burden onto fee payers. A biocontrol program for controlling invasive weeds would also be eliminated, saving \$250,000. Don Farrar, Gilliam County's weed officer, argued against the proposal because biological control with predatory insects can effectively suppress large infestations of weeds. "This program has been one of the best in the nation and it would be sad to lose that," he said.

Births 
A daughter,
Genna Rue McHatton
was born February 19, 2017 in Enterprise to **Amanda McHatton** of Joseph.


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