

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

THE TREASURE OF WALLOWA COUNTY

Some places find their treasures underground—think Oklahoma, Texas, Kentucky, West Virginia and other places whose economies have long leaned on hydrocarbons. In other settings, treasure – the thing that nurtures and sustains an economy — lies in navigable rivers, deep harbors, fertile soils, or beneficent climates. Wallowa County's treasure lies in its landscape. The mountains. The canyons. And most of all, the lake.

The presence of antiquated, corroding barrels that may still contain toxic chemicals lurking just beneath the surface of Wallowa Lake is alarming. Even if they prove empty, or at least eviscerated of compounds that we once used cavalierly, but now view with dread, their presence is yet another wakeup call to the fragility

and vulnerability of this invaluable resource.

We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Blue Mountain Divers for finding and reporting those barrels, and to Oregon's DEQ and to the federal EPA for taking their discovery seriously,

and acting to investigate and carefully remove the threat.

This scare should be a wakeup call for all of us. It is a frightening glimpse of what could be. Imagine a lake with imperiled water quality. With no fish. With algal blooms. Or a lake surrounded with, choked by, houses that few of us who earn our livings here could ever afford, but

leaving our serene landscape forever disrupted.

Like the careful removal of those barrels, the promised transformation of the Yanke property into a publicly-accessible, multi-use, wild and working landscape is another huge

and significant step toward preserving a treasure that we all—residents and visitor alike—revere. For the moraines are as much a

part of Wallowa Lake as its water, its fish, and its afternoon wind. Our newest commissioner has stepped up to the plate to actively help the Wallowa Land Trust and the other partners on this transaction find the funds needed

to complete the purchase.

There remains a source of funding as yet untapped: our pool of visitors. And the individuals in our community.

Suppose at each event, and at each merchant, we had a donation box to help consummate that purchase. Suppose we put on a Save the Moraines benefit concert. Suppose we offered visitors and residents alike a way to contribute, no matter how small, toward conserving our treasure.

Lisa Anderson, one of the divers who found and reported the barrels that lurk beneath the surface of the lake, said "The lake is a gem to be treasured." She's right. The lake – in its entirety, moraines and all—is unique and beautiful. Such a creation should be preserved for the future. Thanks to all those working toward this goal. Let's keep going.

OTHER VOICES

Few farms in the middle are a challenge for rural communities

Chris Mertz, director of the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service field office in Olympia, Wash., says that while the number of small farms continues to grow, larger farms continue to get bigger.

Farms both small and large, it seems, are feeding on the middle. That could have big ramifications for rural communities.

For purposes of the Census, the USDA defines a farm as any property that produces, or has the capability of producing, \$1,000 worth of agricultural products a year.

Because the bar is so low, there are a lot of farms — 98,405 in Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

The USDA puts farms into one of three categories — small, medium and large — not by acreage but by total sales. A small farm is any operation with sales of less than \$250,000. By that measure, 90% of the region's farms are small.

Sixty-five percent of all

farms produce less than \$10,000 in revenue a year. Nearly a third did not actually sell \$1,000 in product, but had the potential to do so.

A medium-sized farm has sales of more than \$250,000 and less than \$500,000. Just 3,477 farms qualify.

Large farms have sales of more than \$500,000, and there are 5,871 of those in the Pacific Northwest.

The census measures what it calls "farm concentration of market value," which reflects how many farms make most of a state's income.

Just 2,870 farms in Oregon, Washington and Idaho, or 2.9% of the total, account for 75% of the region's \$21.8 billion in sales. Half the total is sold by 645 farms.

As more production becomes concentrated in fewer farms, Mertz said it speaks to fewer small farms growing and succeeding as mid-size farms. "Farming is a challeng-

ing occupation," Mertz said. "You need to get to the point of having the resources available to pay all your bills, raise your family and to have a balanced life. Sometimes in the middle category, there might just not be enough revenue."

More than 55,000 primary producers in the region have off-farm jobs, and 36,000 work more than 200 days a year off the farm.

There's nothing wrong with being a part-time farmer as long as there's an off-farm job available to sufficiently supplement the farm income. If there's not, that farm will be absorbed by a larger operation, or sold into hobby farms, and a family will have to move to find opportunities elsewhere.

The challenge for rural communities is to remain economically viable and able to provide the opportunities to support these farm families in the middle.

Oregon Wolf Plan vote Friday

SALEM, Ore.—The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission meets Thursday and Friday, June 6-7 at ODFW Headquarters, 4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE, Salem beginning at 8 a.m. both days.

See the full agenda at www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/commission/minutes/19/06_June/index.asp

During Thursday's meeting, Commissioners are expected to:

- Hear a briefing on the crab fishery and reducing the risk of whale entanglements.

- Adopt harvest limits for Pacific sardine in state waters for July 2019-June 2020 based on federal regulations. No directed commercial fishery and very limited other fisheries are recommended due to a decline in Pacific sardine biomass over recent years.

- Allocate big game auction and raffle tags, which are special hunting tags that allow a long hunting season in and expanded hunt area while raising funds for the Access and Habitat program, plus Rocky Mtn goat/bighorn sheep and pronghorn research and management.

- Approve funding for

See the full agenda at www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/commission/minutes/19/06_June/index.asp

Access and Habitat projects that provide hunting access or improve wildlife habitat on private land.

- Hear a briefing on proposed changes to 2020 big game hunting regulations as part of efforts to improve and simplify the Big Game Hunting Regulations

A public forum will be held Thursday morning after the Director's report for people who wish to testify about an issue not on the formal meeting agenda. Call the ODFW Director's office at least 48 hours before the meeting at (503) 947-6044 to schedule.

On Friday, Commissioners will be asked to correct minor errors in the deer and elk roadkill salvage rules and season dates for Burns Paiute Tribe Ceremonial harvest tags.

The rest of the day will be devoted to consideration and adoption of a revised

Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. Once adopted, the Plan will be the third edition of the Wolf Plan, which was first adopted in 2005 after an extensive public process and last revised in 2010.

The proposed Draft Plan was developed after extensive meetings with stakeholders and public comment at several prior Commission meetings. It incorporates ideas where consensus among stakeholders was reached, but agreement was not possible on all topics.

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission consists of seven members appointed by the governor for staggered four-year terms. One commissioner must be from each congressional district, one from east of the Cascades and one from the west of the Cascades. Two commissioners recently ended their terms (Bob Webber of Port Orford and Laura Anderson of Newport) and new commissioners Mary Wahl of Langlois and Bob Spelbrink of Siletz began their terms in May. All seven current commissioners are expected at the meeting June 6-7.

U.S. organic sales break records, top \$50 billion

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

The U.S. organic market hit a record \$52.5 billion in 2018, up 6.3% from the previous year and breaking through the \$50 billion mark for the first time.

Records were made in both food and nonfood categories. Organic food sales at \$47.9 billion increased 5.9% year over year, and organic non-food sales jumped 10.6% to \$4.6 billion, according to the 2019 Organic Industry Survey released May 17.

Almost 6% of all food sold in the U.S. is now organic, and growth in the organic sector continued to outpace gains in overall food and comparable non-food sales in 2018.

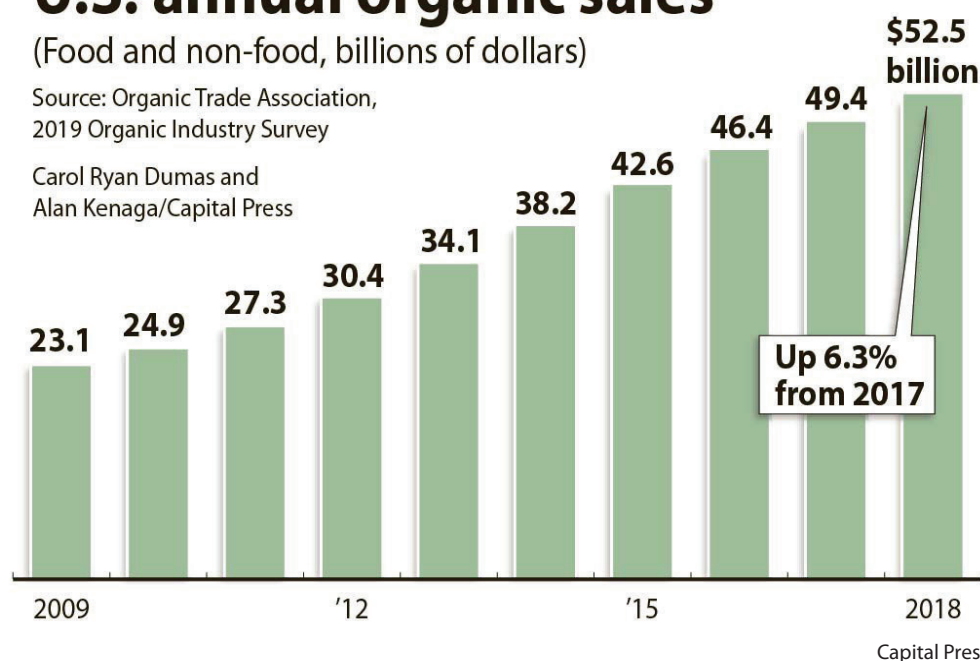
Total food sales in the U.S. increased 2.3% and nonfood sales rose 3.7%, according to the Organic Trade Association, which commissioned the survey performed by Nutrition

U.S. annual organic sales

(Food and non-food, billions of dollars)

Source: Organic Trade Association, 2019 Organic Industry Survey

Carol Ryan Dumas and Alan Kenaga/Capital Press



Business Journal.

"Organic is now considered mainstream," Laura Batcha, CEO and executive director of OTA, said.

Organic products can be found in every aisle of the grocery store and in box stores, club warehouses and

convenience stores and are increasingly available on the internet, she said.

The organic seal is gaining new appeal as consumers realize not only that certification is monitored and supported by official standards but it's the only seal

that encompasses the spectrum of non-GMO and free of chemicals, dyes and preservatives, she said.

The survey found sales of organic fruits and vegetables, which now account for 36.3% of all organic food sales, grew 5.6% to \$17.4

billion in 2018. Organic represented nearly 15% of all produce sold in the U.S., nearly doubling market share in the last 10 years.

Sales of organic dairy and eggs, the second-largest organic sector, were \$6.5 billion. Those sales increased just 0.8% due to slower dairy sales. Organic egg sales, however, increased 9.3% to \$858 million.

The strongest growth in the organic nonfood sector came from fiber, which accounts for 40 percent of the organic nonfood market. Organic fiber sales in 2018 increased 12.5% to \$1.8 billion.

The growth in organic sales is due in large part to industry collaboration and activism. In an environment where government is not moving fast enough, the industry is choosing to meet the consumer rather than get stalled, Batcha said.

The industry is investing in itself through OTA's GRO Organic program, a voluntary check-off like effort to

advance organic research, promotion and education. It is also actively engaged in projects to expand organic production, help transitioning farmers and get the word out to consumers on the benefits of organic, she said.

OTA also formed a task force to prevent organic fraud in the global market, which resulted in an official prevention program, she said.

The industry is also challenging USDA in court over its delay and withdrawal of the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices final rule — a prime example of government slowing advancement of the organic seal, she said.

"The organic sector has come together some 20 times in the last 10 years to agree to consensus-based recommendations to strengthen the organic standards. But not a single one of these recommendations had been acted on to become a final upgraded requirement," she said.

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