

## VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

## ‘When it’s all electric cars, this won’t be as much fun’

The Oregon Mountain Cruise last weekend presented an inspiring collection of automotive art. From painstaking restoration of fragile antiques to wildly creative manifestations of raw power, the vehicles ran the full gamut of gas-guzzling guts and glory.

But there was something missing. Adults under about 35 years of age stayed away in droves. This was a show for boomers, not Millennial, Gen X or Gen Z. The fascination with hydrocarbon-driven power has waned. The world is turning in a different direction, and we are not all pleased. Witness the comment someone made at the show: “When it’s all electric cars, this won’t be as much fun.”

When I returned home and clocked onto the Internet, the first thing that popped up was a full-screen ad for a car: the I.D. Buzz. It looked oddly like the VW Bug featured in the movie Little Miss Sunshine: a yellow microbus. Except that it was electric. “In the dark, we saw the light,” the oddly moving ad’s video said, a nod to VW’s recent issues with overly optimistic gas mileage ratings. While the proto-type Buzz has all-wheel drive and travels nearly 300 miles on one tank of elec-



Courtesy of VW/Volkswagen

**The VW ID Buzz Concept Car is powered by a 369 HP electric motor. If we heed the warnings of climate scientists, Wallowa County can save its forests instead of growing palm trees.**

trons, it still seems a far cry from something that can haul a horse trailer.

But change is coming whether we want it or not. It always has. It always will. Vehicles change. Generations change. Climates change. Today, those three things are intertwined. In general, as more urbanized and younger humans begin to take the reins of culture, the desire to drive cars, period, let alone something with a carburetor and has waned. Between 1983 and 2010 the percentage of 17-year-olds who got driver’s licenses plummeted from

69 to 46 percent, according to the University of Michigan’s Transportation Institute. Similar statistics are everywhere. What’s behind it? Two things. It’s cheaper to use mass transit. And fossil fuel use is a major contributor to an increasingly temperamental warming climate.

If we think that climate change, AKA global warming, has no effect here at home in Wallowa County, think again. This week saw two public gatherings that laid out how a warming climate is causing huge problems right here. Fire ecologist and Enter-

prise resident Dr. Randi Jandt addressed both the Wallowa County Rotary and an audience at Wallowology with a talk about how warming climates are affecting Alaska. But she also addressed climate change here in The County and across Oregon. Summer temperatures have increased by 2 degrees F since 1895. Summer fire seasons have expanded from three months to five. Sumer heat waves are longer. And along with drier, hotter summers, comes an increase in lightning strikes—a 12 percent annual increase for each degree of

summer warming, Jandt said. “I remember that we had some really severe lightning storms and strikes in April this year,” she said. “April thunderstorms were rare to non-existent in the past. They may not be in the future.”

Last week, a forest health workshop along the Lostine River with OSU Extension Forester John Punches revealed that grand fir at low to mid elevations are dying in huge numbers not because of insect pests, but because the trees simply cannot tolerate the lengthening periods of higher temperatures that each summer now brings. No matter how much water the grand fir pump up their trunks, stems and branches, they cannot keep the surface of their needles cool enough to function. And so the trees cease photosynthesis. Essentially, they suffocate and starve.

As much fun as the festival of motorcars might be, the turn towards cleaner vehicles and cleaner energy is welcome as climate change begins to tighten its grip on us. Someday there will be an electric F250 to haul the horse. Or maybe a horse to haul the old F250. Better than growing Imnaha tomatoes in Joseph, and witnessing forests of mostly dead trees—or no forests at all.

## Dam safety overhaul approved by lawmakers

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

Dam owners would be subject to civil penalties for failing to maintain the structures under an overhaul of Oregon’s dam safety laws that’s passed the Legislature.

House Bill 2085, which passed the Senate unanimously June 3 after clearing the House in April, would also clarify the Oregon Water Resources Department’s authority over approving dam construction, removal and modification, among other provisions.

“This aging infrastructure needs to be carefully watched,” said Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, noting that the bill also streamlines court procedures for compelling upgrades to unsafe dams.

“This is important authority that is necessary to protect the people of Oregon,” he said.

The bill applies to about 950 dams regulated by OWRD, including 75 “high hazard” structures that would likely cause deaths if they failed. About one-fourth of such dams are considered to be in poor or unsatisfactory condition.

“Every year, we typically have at least one dam that has a safety incident,” said Racquel Rancier, the agency’s senior policy coordinator, during a May hearing.

Since the 1800s, 55 dams have failed in Oregon, including one that killed seven people in 1896. Oregon’s dam safety statutes haven’t been updated since 1929.

Under the bill, OWRD could order a maintenance action after inspecting a dam that poses a high or significant hazard, which the owner can challenge in an administrative hearing.

Dam owners can work with the agency to develop a plan for correcting problems under the bill, while under current law, such orders are automatically subject to administrative hearings.

If the owner doesn’t perform the ordered maintenance, the agency can impose a civil penalty in an amount that’s yet to be determined by the Oregon Water Resources Commission.

Such penalties would be waived if the owner perform carries out the maintenance work and the final order can also be contested in court.

“Today, we’re in the position of asking, ‘Please,’” Rancier said, explaining that OWRD can’t impose penalties under current law.

## Oregon adopts revised wolf management plan

By GEORGE PLAVEN  
Capital Press

SALEM — Oregon has revised and updated its plan for managing the state’s growing wolf population, retaining provisions that allow depredating wolves to be killed.

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission voted 6-to-1 on June 7 to approve the long-awaited, highly contentious plan after hours of public testimony and debate over last-minute amendments.

Commissioner Greg Wolley, of Portland, was the only member to vote against the plan.

Getting to this point was no easy feat. Wolf management has been a source of controversy ever since the species returned to Oregon in 1999. The state adopted its first Wolf Conservation and Management Plan in 2005, which is supposed to be revised every five years.

The last revision happened in 2010, when wildlife officials identified just 21 known wolves statewide. Today, the minimum known population is 137 wolves. The commission removed wolves east of highways 395, 78 and 95 from the state endangered species list in 2015, and the latest plan revision started a year later.

Gray wolves are still federally protected in the western two-thirds of Oregon, though that could change under a proposal by the Trump administration to delist wolves across the Lower 48 states.

Ranchers have long argued they need to be able to kill wolves that make a habit out of preying on livestock. But environmental groups say management practices should focus more on using non-lethal deterrents to prevent conflicts.

Last year, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife spent more than \$100,000 to hire a professional mediator, bringing the two sides together to try and find areas of compromise. However, the four environmental groups — Oregon Wild, Defenders of Wildlife, Cascadia Wildlands and the Center for Biological Diversity — pulled out of talks, describing the process as flawed and unscientific.

At the heart of the issue is the definition for what ODFW calls “chronic depredation.” Under the revised plan, ranchers in Eastern Oregon can apply to kill wolves if they attack livestock two times within nine months. The 2010 plan allowed for killing wolves after two confirmed attacks over any period of time in Eastern Oregon.



ODFW/Capital Press

**The breeding male of the Walla Walla Pack captured on a remote camera on private property in northern Umatilla County in Feb., 2019. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission voted 6-to-1 on June 7 to approve the long-awaited, highly contentious plan after hours of public testimony and debate over last-minute amendments.**

The commission considered changing the proposed standard to three attacks in 12 months, though the motion was ultimately defeated.

Once a wolf or pack meets the definition of chronic depredation, ODFW can issue what are known as “controlled take” permits that allow other members of the public to kill the predators within a limited scope. Wolf advocates staunchly oppose controlled take, fearing it will lead to general wolf hunting.

The commission did approve an amendment to controlled take regulations, stipulating permits can only be approved through a separate rule-making process. In a statement, ODFW says it has not approved controlled take of wolves and has no plans to at this time.

Derek Broman, ODFW carnivore and furbearer coordinator, said the plan is not dramatically different than before, though it does reflect the current situation in Oregon.

“We continue to maintain a conservation-based plan that is true to its origins, but provides additional clarity,” Broman said. “Now we have a decade of our own information.”

Ranchers from across the state traveled to Salem to provide their input on the plan. Jerome Rosa, executive director of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association, said his members have “suffered enormous losses, both economic and emotional” due to wolves. He and others representing the industry argued

for more collaring of wolves and management zones with population targets to assist producers.

Broman said collaring remains a valuable tool, but stopped short of making any promises. “The issue is, collaring wolves is a very exhausting, very challenging practice,” he said.

In a staff presentation to the commission, Broman said the revised plan does not establish population targets or caps.

Broman said the plan will continue to emphasize non-lethal deterrents in every phase of management, and ODFW added a new chapter to monitor potential threats to the species — such as poaching, diseases and habitat destruction.

Rusty Inglis, a rancher and president of the Harney County Farm Bureau, said the success of the wolf is coming at a high cost for the livestock industry and rural Oregon as a whole.

“Ranching is a mainstay economic driver in most rural communities here in Oregon,” Inglis said. “Whenever a ranching family faces economic loss, the whole community loses.”

Veril Nelson, a southwest Oregon rancher and wolf committee co-chairman for the Cattlemen’s Association, said the losses don’t just come from dead animals. He said studies have shown cows suffer stress, weight loss and poor grazing that can all affect a rancher’s bottom line.

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