

Farmers, ranchers immune from liability on wildfires

By George Plaven
Capital Press

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature has passed a bill to protect farmers and ranchers from liability while fighting dangerous wildfires, such as the 2018 Substation fire in Wasco and Sherman counties.

Senate Bill 290 is similar to other Good Samaritan laws that encourage bystanders to assist people in emergencies without worrying about being sued if something goes wrong.

Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, sponsored SB 290, which passed both the House and Senate unanimously. Gov. Kate Brown signed the bill during a ceremony on June 18 with members of the Oregon Wheat Growers League.

Hansell said the bill was inspired by the deadly Substation fire that torched 78,425 acres of dry wheat fields and grasslands last year in north-central Oregon.

Wheat farmers were among the first to arrive on scene, using tractors and disc plows to dig wide firebreaks around homes and communities. If not for their quick response, Hansell said the fire might have devastated the



Courtesy of Molly Belshe

Marty Belshe, a wheat farmer in Sherman County, Ore., uses a tractor and disc plow to create a fire break around one of his fields in anticipation of the Substation Fire that burned 78,425 acres in July. A new state law protects farmers and others who fight wildfires from incurring liability.

nearby small cities of Moro and Grass Valley, similar to Paradise, Calif.

“Farmers have been doing this ever since we began raising wheat,” said Hansell, whose fam-

ily runs a wheat farm in Umatilla County.

One farmer, 64-year-old John Ruby, died trying to protect his neighbor’s home from the fire. Hansell said the tragedy raised

concerns about potential liability for farmers and residents in a similar situation.

That is what SB 290 seeks to address. It states that a person who voluntarily joins the effort

will not be held civilly liable for injury resulting from the “good faith performance” of firefighting activities. Professionally trained firefighters are not covered by the legislation.

Blake Rowe, CEO of the Oregon Wheat Growers League, said he is pleased with the bill to prevent farmers from being sued for trying to do the right thing.

“Anytime you’re talking about limiting liability for somebody who does something out on the landscape, or responds to an accident, we want to protect them if they’re acting in good faith,” Rowe said.

Without wheat farmers on the front lines, Rowe said the Substation fire probably would have been worse.

“There were places where farmers were able to disc lines, slow things down and get some equipment in front of the fire that actually helped slow the spread,” Rowe said. “Farmers bring equipment and skills to the party that some of our rural (fire) districts just don’t have.”

The new law will become effective on Jan. 1, 2020.

“This is a great, positive bill for rural Oregon,” Hansell said.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

Think before you vote!

Think before you vote!

After watching the D-Day Memorial in France and seeing all the rows of marble crosses, I started thinking of the countless Americans who gave their lives for our liberty and freedom from the Revolutionary War to the present day. It saddens me to know that there are people in our country who would throw their sacrifice away for a false promise of power and “Free Stuff.” Think very carefully before voting for a socialist agenda. God bless America.

Mike McLain
Lostine

Government bureaucracy runs amuck AGAIN

It was astounding to read that burnt timber from only 250 acres can be salvaged from the 80,000 acre 2015 Grizzly Bear Complex Fire without an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). That’s about 1/3 of 1% of the total burnt timber land!. Perhaps the Forestry Service should be required to conduct an Economic Impact Analysis of their forest management policies that have contributed to the increasing incidence of “super fires” that are destroying our forests.

It’s rumored that the U.S. Department of Interior is considering measures to exempt the Forestry Service of certainly overly-restrictive environmental regulation under certain circumstances. Maybe this would be a good test case.

Scott Hathorn
Joseph

OK Theatre volunteers needed

Wallowa County has many wonderful things, and the OK Theatre is at the top of that list. This summer the old OK turns 100, and there is a huge Centennial Celebration July 12-13 at the theatre and on Main Street in Enterprise. If you love the OK and want to show your support, please consider volunteering for the bash.

There are lots of jobs open, and each shift worked gets a free Saturday pass. Find the volunteer signup online on the OK Theatre’s Facebook page, or come in or call me at NAPA Auto Parts in Enterprise – 541-426-3181. It’s going to be a fun event, and if you can give a few hours of your time we won’t ask you to do it again until the Bicentennial Celebration in 2119.

Chris Lozier
Enterprise

FDA needs to learn a new language

Some call it cowboy talk. Others call it straight talk, plain talk, talking turkey or just plain English.

Whatever you want to call it, the Food and Drug Administration often doesn’t do it.

A case in point. The FDA has been monkeying around — there’s some plain talk for you — with the labels the agency wants to paste on jars of honey and maple syrup and on containers of cranberry products.

The FDA wanted to tell consumers what is in honey and maple syrup. If ever there were two products that need no label whatsoever, it’s honey and maple syrup.

What’s in honey? H-O-N-E-Y. End of story.

What’s in maple syrup? M-A-P-L-E S-Y-R-U-P.

There’s no added anything. On the nutritional labels of those two products, only carbohydrates — sugars — are listed.

What the ever-so-helpful FDA was trying to do is point out that if someone put honey or maple syrup on a pancake, he would be adding sugar to it.

Fair enough, except the FDA said that honey and maple syrup contained “added sugars” because they added sugar to whatever they were put on.

In plain language, that is wrong. How or why the FDA ever came up with

OTHER VOICES

Capital Press

that idea, we cannot say. That’s like saying milk has added ingredients because some people put it on their cereal.

In the case of cranberry products, anyone who has ever eaten one knows they are tart. To make them less tart, sugar is added to some products made with cranberries. Why the FDA needs to say anything, we cannot imagine. It’s right there on the nutrition label.

Now, however, the FDA has reworked these labels in a way that is still bizarre. The labels now say that if



Capital Press

Maple syrup producers complain that a Food and Drug Administration labeling requirement will mislead consumers into thinking sugar is added to their product.

you put honey or maple syrup on a pancake you will add sugar to your diet.

FDA might want to rename its label policy, “Nutrition for Dummies.”

Why the FDA gets itself involved in such tomfoolery, we cannot say.

What we can say is the FDA is the same agency that took the Food Safety Modernization Act and wrote rules that apply to everything from cattle feed — distillers grains — to onions, which had never been involved in food safety problems.

By the time the FDA was done, the food safety regulations included 14 final rules and 36 separate guidance documents on such things as 12 pages on counting the number of employees a farm has. The title: “Determining the Number of Employees for Purposes of the ‘Small Business’ Definition in Parts 117 and 507 (CGMP and Preventive Controls Regulations for Human and Animal Food): Guidance for Industry.”

Good grief.

Such rules are nearly unreadable by anyone who is not a bureaucrat. A new industry has sprung up to help farmers figure out what the FDA means in those documents.

We have a suggestion. The folks at the FDA should go back to school and take a class: English as a second language.

They have bureaucratese down, now they should try cowboy talk.

Walden joins with Dem rep to take out robocalls

East Oregonian

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. House Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr., D-New Jersey, and Republican leader Greg Walden, R-Oregon, teamed up to stop robocalls.

The pair Thursday unveiled bipartisan legislation, the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act, to end illegal robocall practices.

“Americans deserve to be free of the daily danger and harassment of robocalls,” Pallone and Walden said in a joint statement. “It’s time we end the robocall epidemic and restore trust back into our phone system. We’re pleased to announce we’ve reached a deal on comprehensive bipartisan legislation to stop illegal robocalls.”

Last year, an estimated 47.8 billion robocalls were placed nationwide, according to the news release from Walden’s office, an increase of 17 billion calls over the previous year. The illegal calls affect American life in increasingly harmful ways, from scams to disrupting the health care system.

The legislation requires phone carriers to implement call authentication technology so consumers can trust their caller ID again, with no additional line-item for consumers, and includes a process to help rural carriers implement the technology. The act also allows carriers to offer call blocking services with no additional line charge on an opt-out basis.

“Americans should be able to block

robocalls in a consistent and transparent way without being charged extra for it,” the pair stated. “Our legislation also gives the FCC and law enforcement the authority to enforce the law and quickly go after scammers. We look forward to moving this bill through the Communications and Technology Subcommittee next week.”

The new bill also includes provisions from the Support Tools to Obliterate Pesky (STOP) Robocalls Act, which Republic Reps. Bob Latta of Ohio and Mike Doyle of Pennsylvania introduced earlier this year. Latta and Doyle, the chair of the Communications and Technology Subcommittee, are co-sponsors of the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act.

Open July 4th

House 9am-3pm

602 West 1st Street Wallowa, Oregon 97885
(541) 886-8000

June 28/29 2019

12th

Annual

CHIEF JOSEPH DAYS RANCH RODEO

Friday

2:30PM Trail Ride
Meet at Harley Tucker Rodeo Grounds

6PM Dinner & Auction
Social Hour @ 6PM

Beef Dinner @ 7PM

Auction Calcutta
\$15 per person
\$7 5-10 years
4 & under FREE

Saturday

2:00PM Ranch Rodeo
Harley Tucker Rodeo Grounds

Rodeo Tickets
\$5 Adults
\$3 5-10 years
4 & under FREE

Tickets available at the gate

*Proceeds go to the CJD Scholarship