



Feds don't care about divorce decree

Dear Liz: I am in my third marriage. My first two marriages each lasted 10 years.

My spouses worked in jobs requiring them to pay into Social Security. I am currently retired (since 1999) and worked for a city government my entire career.

I currently receive a pension from the city.

Am I entitled to receive anything from Social Security for the time I was married to my previous spouses? It seems only fair since I had to pay each of them spousal support.

Answer: That's a novel argument. Alas, the Social Security system doesn't care about the details of your divorce decrees.

You can call Social Security and ask if you're eligible for a benefit, but don't get your hopes up if your pension comes from a job that didn't pay into Social Security.

A provision known as the government pension offset probably would wipe out any divorced spousal or divorced survivor benefit you might receive.

Dear Liz: Our 23-year-old daughter has a low-limit credit card from her bank, primarily to build her credit history.

For the same purpose, we also added her as an authorized user on one of our credit cards (yes, we can trust her).

When she checked her credit reports recently at annualcreditreport.com, one of the agencies produced a report but another claimed they couldn't find her. Is that normal for a relatively new credit user?

Could it possibly be because she has a hyphenated middle name? Should we worry?

Answer: It can take 30 days or more for information to be updated at the credit bureaus, so she should try again and also check the third credit bureau.

If two bureaus can't find her after 30 days, then it's possible that both credit cards report to only one bureau. In that case, she should consider getting a credit-builder loan from a credit union that reports to all three bureaus.

Otherwise, the problem is likely the credit bureau's, and she should try ordering the missing credit report via the U.S. mail. The bureau that couldn't find her will have instructions for requesting a report that way on its site.

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Mark Porter, Oregon Department of Agriculture/Contributed Photo
Andy Marcum, weed control manager for Wallowa County, stands in a field near Alder Slope last summer where welted thistle was found.

Farmer named 'Weed Warrior' for welted thistle fight

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Enterprise-area farmer Jim McCormack is being recognized by the Wallowa County Weed Board as the Noxious Weed Warrior for 2021 for his efforts to stamp out welted thistle on his Alder Slope land and alert the county to other infestations, according to Weed Department Manager Andy Marcum.

"It's one of two sites in all of North America," Marcum said. "It could be extremely invasive if it wasn't for landowners like Jim who are keeping an eye on it and calling us when they see it on their neighbors' land and we're able to keep it contained. Ever since it was found in 2016, we haven't found it anywhere else other than the original site."

County Commissioner Todd Nash, who also is a rancher and keeps a close eye on the county's agricultural resources, was the one who discovered the member of the Carduus family of thistles.

"I drove past it and then I stopped on Alder Slope in a county right-of-way alongside the road," Nash said. "I took a picture of it and sent the picture to Mark Porter and he spent some time identifying it and found out that it was, indeed, welted thistle. The closest plant was in North Dakota or southern Canada."

Porter, who is based in Enterprise, is the regional noxious weed specialist for the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Nash said after that, one area resident sprayed it.

"It was quite a large plant," he said. "Then, looking in other areas and surrounding ditch banks, they found quite a lot



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain
Wallowa County's 2021 Noxious Weed Warrior Joe McCormack shows off the hats and a hammer he received Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2021, in recognition of his efforts to battle invasive weeds in the county.

of plants. It had been there for a while. It's a big, impressive thistle with big, purple blooms on it that were easy to see."

"It took a bit of botany work sending off samples," Porter said. "There was no reason to expect we'd find welted thistle."

But he was appreciative of the work by Marcum and McCormack in battling the weed.

"Finding a noxious weed when it first arrives is really important and also to get it controlled when it's small," Porter said. "This is a great example

of early detection and rapid response."

Where did it come from?

"We never had those thistles about four or five years ago when a ditch company came through and cleaned the ditch out," McCormack said. "They dumped the pilings on my side of the lower ditch, and the next year they just started coming up everywhere. I think somebody brought them into this county and threw them into that ditch."

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Short session takes on big ag issues

Capital Press

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature convenes in the coming weeks to pick up where it left off last year. The Capital Press takes a look at proposals lawmakers will consider and what they mean to agriculture.

Overtime for farmworkers

Farm groups and labor advocates are expected to be preoccupied with agricultural overtime wages during Oregon's month-long legislative session that begins on Feb. 1.

The prospect of eliminating the agriculture industry's exemption from higher overtime wages got a lot of attention from lawmakers last year, but attempts to negotiate a compromise have been complicated by litigation over the issue.

A lawsuit alleges the exemption lacks an underpinning in state law and isn't constitutional because farmworkers are excluded from "privileges" enjoyed by other employees.

It's been an unsettling experience for farm representatives, who were negotiating in "good faith" with labor advocates who were "looking at us in the eye" while planning the legal attack, said Mary Anne Cooper, vice president of public policy for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

The overtime issue has been presented as a "racial equity agenda item," but in reality, ending the exemption wouldn't put more money into farmworkers' pockets, she said. "It's just not going to be the result because our members can't afford to pay more wages."

Proponents of ending the overtime exemption seem to believe farmers can just raise their prices, when they'd actually be forced to limit employee hours to contain labor costs, said Jeff Stone, executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries.

"Clearly, we need to use different words because they don't understand the price-taking side of ag," he said.

Timber compromise

Another major natural resource proposal before Oregon lawmakers will be the compromise deal between environmental groups and the timber industry, under which logging buffers near streams would be expanded.

The agreement would also restrict logging below steep slopes to prevent sediment from reaching streams and implement other changes in the forest practices law.

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Smith



Stone



Cooper

State enforces new federal hemp rules for state growers

By **ALEX BAUMHARDT**
Oregon Capital Chronicle

SALEM — Hemp growers in the state will now need to abide by several new federal regulations that will be overseen by the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

The changes come at a time of growing concerns over illegal marijuana operations in parts of Southern Oregon. Both hemp and marijuana are cannabis plants, similar in appearance and smell but distinguished by differences in their levels of the psychoactive tetrahydrocannabinol compound.

The new regulations require

that Oregon growers now must provide for each key person listed on a grower application a criminal history report and report yearly to the state Agriculture Department the number of acres they planted and pounds harvested. Those figures then get reported to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The new rules also require growers to collect and submit plant samples to the state agency for testing within 30 days of harvesting and require growers to register with the federal Farm Service Agency. That agency is in charge of agriculture policies, farm loan programs and conservation, commodity and disaster

relief programs.

Oregonians have been allowed to grow recreational marijuana with a license since 2016 and industrial hemp with a license since 2015, but because the two cannabis plants are so similar in appearance and smell, it is difficult to enforce laws penalizing growers who illegally use hemp licenses to grow marijuana.

Hemp is regulated by the state Agriculture Department while marijuana is regulated by the Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission.

Rules around hemp production in Oregon have been around since

2009. The 2018 federal Farm Bill, which made the crop legal to grow nationwide, added greater regulations, as well as the U.S. Domestic Hemp Production Program, run by the federal Agriculture Department.

To further combat illegal marijuana operations, state lawmakers last year passed House Bill 3000, allowing the state Agriculture Department and the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission to set stricter standards for the production and sale of cannabis products, and to better regulate the amount of THC in cannabis plants. That law also went into effect on Jan. 1.