

State hiding its own scam

DOE conceals rationale for energy credit discounts

Imagine a government agency that thwarts the will of elected officials, as it makes dubious deals with businesses, then tries to hide from the public the purported legal rationale for its actions.

No need to invent such a cagey agency. It already exists. Here in Oregon. It's called the state Department of Energy.

When the Oregon Legislature passed laws creating the Business Energy Tax Credit program, the purpose was to encourage individuals and businesses to invest in projects that were energy efficient or would use renewable sources. Recipients could use the credits to reduce their tax bill. The credits could also be transferred to a third party to raise capital.

The program and the prices were to be administered by the state Department of Energy. Hillary Borrud, a reporter with our Capital Bureau, uncovered how shoddy that oversight has been.

She revealed that Energy officials quietly stopped enforcing pricing and other rules for the credit transfers back in 2011. This allowed private brokers to arrange deals in which the prices were never verified by the state. It was later learned that some buyers avoided paying capital gains taxes on the transfer.

Energy's inconsistent handling of the credits

program is troubling and smacks of political favoritism. In the wake of these revelations, there has been a steady stream of resignations of Energy officials, including the head of the loan program and the agency's chief financial officer.

Gov. Kate Brown has asked the Legislature to review and then shut down the Business Energy Tax Credit program. That's not good enough. A full audit is warranted.

Gov. Brown should also order the release of a recent opinion on the matter by the Department of Justice. Energy officials have claimed for years that lawyers at Justice vetted and approved the discounted sales. If that's the case, why are Energy officials and the governor refusing to release that report?

Our company, EO Media Group, along with Pamplin Media Group and the Oregonian, have been rebuffed in attempts to obtain the opinion under Oregon's Public Records Law. That law is aimed at ensuring that the public's business is transparent to its citizens and taxpayers.

Officials at the Department of Energy have ignored directions from the Legislature and its own administrative rules. Now they're hiding behind claims of attorney-client privilege. It's past time they give up this charade.



Let Oregon's wolf plan work; it's time to delist

By Jim Akenson
Conservation Director, Oregon
Hunters Association

When I look at Google Earth, my first reaction is to zoom in and out for perspective. Greater perspective helps us gain a better view of wolves in Oregon, and how removing them from the state's threatened and endangered list will allow them to be managed as a species that has been successfully recovered.

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report from April, 2009, states there were already between 60,000 and 70,000 wolves in North America at that time, including an estimated 12,000 in Alberta and British Columbia, and at least 1,645 in the northern Rocky Mountains recovery area, which is recognized as a southern extension of the robust Canadian population.

Zooming in tighter to Idaho, which was a node for Rocky Mountain recovery with 15 wolves reintroduced in 1995 and another 20 in 1996, we see that Idaho's wolf numbers tripled in just two years to 115, and reached 192 by 2000. As of late 2014, there existed a minimum pack count of 104 (with another 23 state border packs) and an estimated population of 770 wolves. This all follows six years of regulated hunting and trapping of wolves.

Idaho has been the source population, through dispersal, for wolf re-establishment in Oregon. The first Oregon pack to be confirmed was the Wenaha Pack, documented in 2009.

Our state anticipated an inevitable wolf movement from Idaho, and by 2005 had produced and adopted a Wolf Management Plan. This three-phased approach called for evaluating an option for delisting once the criteria

were met for Phase II.

The criteria called for four breeding packs to successfully rear two or more pups for three successive years. By 2014, these criteria had been met and exceeded, as there were nine known successful breeding pairs of wolves in Oregon, including eight packs in northeast Oregon and one in the southern Cascade Mountains. In recent weeks, there have been three wolf activity areas identified in southern Oregon.

The minimum population is estimated at 81, not counting this year's pups (13 of the 16 documented pairs had litters this year).

Now, zoom out to include the entire northern Rocky Mountain region, and it becomes obvious Oregon's wolves are well connected and thriving, and it's equally clear they are ready to be removed from Oregon's endangered species list.

We also need to look at how wolves have affected neighboring states to gain a clearer picture of what we can expect in the coming years.

In Idaho's Unit 26, within the Middle Fork Zone of central Idaho, wolves were reintroduced in the mid-1990s. The elk population was 1,270 and hunter harvest in 2006 was 89 bull elk.

By 2011, counts for Unit 26 were just 366 total elk and hunter harvest was a meager 24 bulls. Hunter numbers for the three units comprising the Middle Fork Zone dropped in half, going from 1,678 in 2006 to 821 in 2011. The pattern of decline continued with only 757 elk hunters going to those wilderness units in 2012.

The pattern here is crippling for the local rural economies, where hunters start their journeys to the backcountry.

Wolf predation might not be the only factor, influencing central

Idaho elk numbers, but with a high wolf pack density in the Middle Fork Zone, it is the dominating factor according to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Contrary to claims made by animal protection groups, delisting does not remove protections for wolves in Oregon.

Wolves will remain a protected species, and they are still federally listed in all but the eastern-most sliver of Oregon. Delisting will, however, start the journey down the road to Phase III and allow the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) more options for applying management practices.

Following through on the promises made to Oregon's agricultural community will also foster better tolerance of wolves and maintain the credibility of Oregon's Wolf Plan.

We need to look more broadly on the issue of wolves and expand our focus to be able to see beyond state lines. Wolves have demonstrated the ability to look beyond state borders, and we should, too. Oregon developed a very effective management plan with detailed criteria to recover wolves in this state, while also protecting other wildlife species and agriculture.

It is vital that we carefully follow the direction of the wolf plan, which was developed with buy-in from many diverse stakeholders. We must stick with the plan and delist wolves in Oregon.

Author Jim Akenson, conservation director for the Oregon Hunters Association, holds a master's degree and a bachelor's degree in natural resources. He had long tenures working for the University of Idaho and ODFW. In Idaho, he managed a remote field station and conducted studies on cougar and wolf predation effects on big game populations.

CORRECTION

The Oct. 21 "On the Hunt" article about Jerry Russell of Kimberly should have stated that in the last six years it hasn't taken Russell more than one shot to kill an animal while hunting (not six shots). The Eagle apologizes for the error.

WHERE TO WRITE

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- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
- **State Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** (District: 60), Room H-475, State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., Salem OR 97301. Phone:

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- **State Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R** — (District 30) Room S-223, State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-986-1950. Email: sen.tedferrioli@state.or.us. Email: TFER2@aol.com. Phone: 541-490-6528. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/ferrioli.

- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.

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- **The White House**, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500; Phone-comments: 202-456-1111; Switchboard: 202-456-1414.
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Get the state off this crazy idea

To the Editor,
I have lived up Canyon Creek for 37 years. I have only seen water come over the overflow one time. Most of the time there is no water in it. I'd like to know their idea of how it could wash out. It held back a lot of runoff when the high school flooded. How can it break with 2-foot-by-4-foot boulders, 3-foot-by-4-foot boulders and larger. So many holes between these rocks (leaks).

It's not hurting anything the way it is. It would be nicer if it were repaired. I hope the county boys can get the state off this crazy idea. I'm glad to see them working on the rest of the stream toward town. That's the part that concerns me as far as floods go. My heart hurts for all the people who lost their homes and belongings. We just thank God that no lives were lost. We love Grant County.

Palmer has interest of the people

To the editor,
In my opinion, even though Glenn Palmer did not take the correct legal channels in protecting the forests and jobs, at least I know that he has the best interest for the people of Grant County and not his own wallet or personal agenda.

Ray Moles
Canyon City

Mary Carr
Seneca, OR

Letters policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to one letter per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters to editor@bmeagle.com, or Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or fax to 541-575-1244.



Grant County's Weekly Newspaper

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1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION RATES
(including online access)
Grant County\$40
Everywhere else in U.S.....\$51
Outside Continental U.S.....\$60
Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER
send address changes to:
Blue Mountain Eagle
195 N. Canyon Blvd.
John Day, OR 97845-1187

USPS 226-340

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