

U.S. House passes bill that prevents a Malheur County national monument

By Sean Ellis
EO Media Group

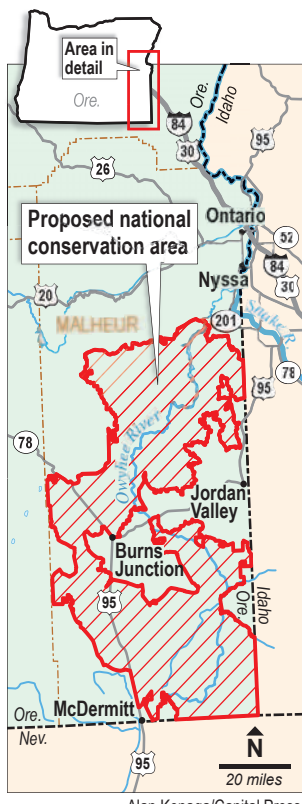
An Interior Department funding bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives includes a provision that blocks a proposed national monument in Malheur County that is strongly opposed by local ranchers and farmers.

The bill passed 231-196 July 14 and is headed to the Senate.

It includes a proposal by Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon, that prevents funds from being used to create a national monument in Malheur County.

Oregon Natural Desert Association, a Bend-based environmental group, has proposed creating a national monument on 2.5 million acres in an area of the county known as the Owyhee Canyons.

It would cover 40 percent of the county and encompass about 33 percent of the county's total grazing land. County residents voted 9-1 against the idea during a special election in March.



Alan Kenagal/Capital Press



U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon

House oppose a monument." "The people of Malheur County have already spoken on this issue and they've come out adamantly opposed to a proposed unilateral national monument declaration on the Owyhee River canyon," Walden said. "Now the U.S. House has also voted on my proposal to block a monument in Malheur County."

Walden's communication director, Andrew Malcolm, said Walden will do everything he can to stop the proposal.

"We're going to continue to speak out against it and use every tool available to try to stop this monument," he said.

The vote was applauded by Jordan Valley rancher Mark Mackenzie, vice president of the Owyhee Basin Stewardship Coalition, which was formed this year to represent ranchers, farmers and others who oppose a national monument designation.

Regardless of what happens to the bill in the Senate, "it's sending a loud message ... that, hey, we're not happy with this proposal," Mackenzie said.

He said if a monument is created, a completely new set of rules would have to be drawn up for it and that unknown is concerning to ranchers.

"It's very, very upsetting for the industry because we don't know what we're going to get," he said.

Malheur County is Oregon's No. 1 cattle-producing county with about \$134 million in farm-gate receipts annually.

Livestock sales yards in Idaho and Oregon recently donated \$17,300 to the OBSC to support its campaign to oppose a national monument.

Producers Livestock Marketing Association donated \$11,600 it raised during cattle auctions in June in Vale, and Treasure Valley Livestock donated \$5,700.

Opponents of the national monument proposal worry that having 40 percent of the county's land designated as a national monument would restrict grazing and access to these lands and harm the local economy.

The national monument proposal "is a huge concern over here," said Paul Skeen, president of the Malheur County Onion Growers Association. "That's why we voted 93 percent 'no' on it."

Ag opponents plan attacks on water, climate issues

By John O'Connell
EO Media Group

Future attacks on conventional agriculture will focus on water and climate, an analyst who tracks activist groups predicts.

Jay Byrne, president and CEO of the intelligence-gathering agency v-Fluence Interactive, told the National Potato Council's summer meeting that agriculture's opponents are working together more closely than ever and spending large sums to convey their messages.

Byrne said their campaigns are beginning to shift from labeling genetically modified organisms to water quality concerns — especially algae blooms and "dead zones" in water bodies.

"This is the most intense advocacy period we've seen in over 20 years of tracking," Byrne said. "Today in the U.S. it's GMO labeling. Very quickly, that's going to turn around and be issues associated with water, and it's going to affect every aspect of conventional production."

Byrne said a "trial balloon" lawsuit filed in Iowa alleges farming is creating downstream environmental challenges, and opponents are already lining up litigants for future cases.

Byrne estimates the groups tracked by v-Fluence have increased spending by 50 to 100 percent annually since 2012.

In 2011, opponents in North America spent \$2.5



Jay Byrne

billion campaigning against GMOs and conventional agriculture, v-Fluence estimated.

Globally, advocacy groups targeting agriculture are likely to spend more than \$10 billion this year, he said.

Charlie Cray, research specialist with Greenpeace USA, agrees water and climate will undoubtedly be key issues heading into the future. He questions Byrne's financial estimates, however.

"I don't think the entire environmental movement has that much money," Cray said. "I would love to see him break (his estimates) down."

Supported by "black marketers" seeking to increase organic sales by discrediting conventional competitors, Byrne said opponents have relied on a relentless "ghost army" of baseless research claims published in "pay-to-play" journals.

Cray agrees the organic sector supports campaigns to point out the benefits of the production system relative to conventional agriculture, but he disagrees that they're being covert.

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Biochar conference explores its use in forestry, agriculture

By Eric Mortenson
EO Media Group

The status and future of biochar is the subject of a four-day conference in August.

The conference, titled "The Synergy of Science and

Industry: Biochar's Connection to Ecology, Soil, Food and Energy," happens Aug. 22-25 at Oregon State University in Corvallis. Registration costs \$375 for the full conference; \$250 for students and nonprofits; \$150 for one-day attendance.

Biochar is essentially charcoal produced by a pyrolysis process of heating biomass in a low-oxygen environment.

The biomass fuel can include such things as logging slash or field straw, which is why it draws interest from the

timber and ag industries.

Researchers and industry advocates say biochar has multiple uses in agriculture and forestry. It can provide a quick fix to depleted soil by reducing acidity, retaining moisture and storing carbon. Conference Chair Tom Miles, founder of T.R. Miles Technical Consultants Inc., in Portland, said it's already used by vineyards in drought-stricken California.

In Japan, biochar develops the strong root systems needed to transplant rice.

Commercial cannabis growers favor biochar for the same reason, Miles said.

In Eastern Oregon, OSU dryland cropping agronomist Stephen Machado is in the third year of researching biochar's use on Columbia Basin wheat and pea crops.

One application of biochar continues to produce a "nice response" in test plots, Machado said.

Wheat yields increased 20 to 33 percent and pea yields increased at a similar rate, Machado said. Soil pH also improved.

"I'm a true believer," Machado said.

He cautioned that not all biochar products are the same, however. The chemistry of the biomass material used to make biochar and the chemistry of the soil on which it will be applied must be considered, he said.

Miles, the conference chair, said biochar increasingly is used in bioswales to filter stormwater or to capture pollutants, and has been shown to remove phosphorous from dairy manure.

Research is progressing on multiple fronts, and entrepreneurs are jumping into biochar production. The Corvallis conference is intended for farmers, foresters, policy makers, biochar producers and other industry professionals and entrepreneurs.

For more conference information, including schedule and registration details, visit <http://usbi2016.org>. Additional information is available through the Northwest Biochar Working Group: <http://nwbiochar.org>.

Fair Update

The Fair Guide has the incorrect divisions listed in the Fair Premiums. The correct divisions are listed below.

WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE THIS MAY HAVE CAUSED.

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- 3 ADULT (OVER 18)
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- 5 INTERMEDIATE (9-13)
- 6 JUNIOR (0-8)

Division 1 will receive ribbon only.

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