

# Commission wrestles with wolf questions

By Eric Mortenson  
Capital Bureau

A couple of items emerged June 8 when the citizen commission that sets Oregon's wildlife policy sat down once again to gnaw on the state's plan for managing wolves.

Among them: There's a question about who should investigate when Oregon wolves devour livestock. A "depredation," as it's called in wildlife management-speak. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife says it could use some help. Cattle ranchers would like to see properly certified local groups involved, to speed up the process. Depredation investigations are important because wolves involved in enough of them can end up dead. "Lethal control," is the

polite term.

Oregon State Police say no thanks. The OSP Wildlife Division head, Capt. Jeff Samuels, said his game officers would need eight hours of training each, about 1,000 hours total. That's expensive. "I don't think it fits into our mission," Samuels told the commission members. "Depredations are not a law enforcement issue."

He said OSP is happy to help ODFW biologists, but making the call on whether wolves were responsible for killing livestock is not its responsibility.

While Samuels was handy, ODFW Commissioner Bruce Buckmaster said the commission has heard allegations that wolf poaching has increased.

"There certainly is



Contributed photo/Baker Aircraft; ODFW

**After radio-collaring a subadult female of the Chesnimnus pack Feb. 23 in Wallowa County, an ODFW biologist double-checks the fit of the GPS radio-collar.**

poaching of wolves," Samuels responded. He didn't provide more details and the commission didn't ask

for any. Groups such as Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands and Center for Biological Diversity maintain wolf

poaching is on the rise.

Another issue: Does the burden of Oregon's wolf management approach weigh too heavily on private landowners? People in Northeast Oregon, especially in Wallowa County and especially cattle ranchers, would say of course. Russ Morgan, ODFW wolf program manager, said 74 percent of confirmed wolf depredations occur on private land.

Michael Finley, the ODFW Commission chair, raised the question. He said it's a dichotomy: Private land with private expectations, and a public resource — wolves — is doing damage and costing owners money.

He wondered out loud whether wolves on private property ought to be managed differently. For example,

require only two confirmed depredations on private land instead of three, the uniform private-public standard.

It's complicated because Oregon land is about 50-50 public and private, often butting up against each other. Wolves go where they want and ranchers use both, because grazing is a permitted activity on land managed by the BLM and Forest Service.

Todd Nash, a Wallowa County commissioner who is wolf committee chair for the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, agreed property lines are intermixed and sometimes unfenced. But he said cattle are private property, and ranchers wouldn't allow someone to rustle their cattle, for instance, no matter where they were grazing. Insert eat for rustle and the point is made.

## Tension over revenue, transportation erupts into confrontation at Capitol

By Paris Achen  
Capital Bureau

Tension over a state transportation funding bill erupted into a confrontation between union leaders and lawmakers June 7 during a hearing on the legislation.

Some union leaders indicated at the hearing that they would oppose the package if legislators fail to pass corporate tax reform this session, which ends July 10.

"We believe it would be a mistake to leave this session in solving one problem and leaving the other for another day and another session," said Steven Demarest, president of SEIU Local 503.

The union represents 55,000 in Oregon, including employees of the Oregon Department of Transportation, homecare workers and others.

"The transportation package would tax workers, drivers and car owners. At the same time, the current budget would cut the hours for homecare workers who care for seniors and people with disabilities, meaning many would face decreases in their



Capital Bureau/Paris Achen

**Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, presents provisions of the state transportation funding bill at the Oregon Capitol in Salem in May 2017. He accused unions of political blackmail over testimony during a hearing on state transportation funding bill June 7.**

pay," he continued.

His testimony prompted Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, to ask: "Is SEIU really willing to sacrifice the transportation package...if revenue doesn't materialize?"

"We believe they have to go together, yes," Demarest replied. "We don't believe the transportation package goes through without revenue reform."

Sen. Brian Boquist,

R-Dallas, who sits on each of the joint committees responsible for the transportation package and revenue reform, then spoke up and accused Demarest of playing "political blackmail."

Demarest denied that unions are trying to blackmail lawmakers.

"We're here to protect and advocate for working Oregonians, in particular low- and middle-income Oregonians, so the idea that workers, individual taxpayers are currently paying more than their fair share to increase that burden even greater is not acceptable," the union president said.

Boquist retorted that what Demarest was "proposing is one or the other."

"If you want to play political blackmail games, let's make sure it's all over every newspaper in the entire state," Boquist said. "... I am one of the individuals that has to put this thing together on both sides, and your union isn't helping; your union is hurting, ... and no, I'm not interested in listening to you anymore."

Throughout negotiations over the transportation bill, lawmakers aimed to craft a package that would be at low risk of a challenge at the ballot.

Another union leader, Dan Smith of Yamhill County SEIU, spoke to the legislator's greatest fear, suggesting that voters might try to refer the package to the ballot and defeat it.

"If it were a good deal, I would suggest it wouldn't collapse by voters," Smith said.

Unions have been trying to recover after suffering a setback at the ballot last November when they attempted to pass a measure that would levy a tax on corporate sales. Business groups unified to defeat the measure.

The Joint Committee on Revenue Reform has been working on a proposal for a commercial activity tax on corporations, which would raise less revenue than the tax that voters cast down in November.

## Democrats propose 'breakthrough' plan for revenue reform

By Paris Achen  
Capital Bureau

In the waning weeks of the legislative session, two leading Democrats have come up with a tax reform plan to address the state's \$1.4 billion revenue shortfall.

The plan by Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, and House Speaker Tina Kotek would raise an estimated \$900 million in the next two years.

"Momentum is building to go forward with revenue reform this session. ... Now, we finally have a breakthrough," Kotek said June 7. "This plan, along with long-term cost containment, is our best chance to increase investments in education while also providing significant tax relief for small businesses and personal tax relief for middle and low-income families."

Hass emphasized that the plan is a package that includes tax reform, containment of state government costs and reductions in state employees' pension benefits.

"These are hard votes for Democrats in the House, but I think they will vote for those, if they know there also is a revenue tax reform package. Without a revenue package, those won't pass, so this is a two-step dance. We have to have both."

If revenue reform fails this session, union leaders say they are poised to petition for a ballot measure to make corporations pay more taxes.

Hass and Kotek have yet to seek official approval from the Joint Committee on Tax Reform, which has to vote on the proposal before it can move to the House floor.

The plan would temporarily hike corporate income

taxes in 2017 and 2018 from 6.6 percent and 7.6 percent to 8 percent and 9 percent in order to raise the \$900 million. The corporate income tax would then be repealed in 2019 and replaced with a commercial activity tax on businesses with annual sales of \$3 million or greater. The change would effectively mean small businesses would no longer have to pay corporate taxes, only a \$250 filing fee, Hass said.

Other states have pursued similar tax reforms to help stabilize their corporate income revenue, he said.

The five-tier rate is proposed at 0.75 percent for services, 0.35 percent for retail trade, 0.25 percent for wholesale, 0.15 percent for agriculture, forestry and fishing, and 0.48 percent for all other industries.

The new tax would come in tandem with a reduction in the personal income tax

to account for any nominal price increases resulting from the commercial activity tax, Hass said.

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Sonshine Christian School will be accepting pre-registrations for the 2017/2018 school year. Registration fee for students is \$75.00.

Zoo Phonic Programs Taught

Pre School students must be 3 years of age before September 1 of the school year and able to toiletting without staff assistance. Their classes will be offered 2 days a week from 9-11am.

Pre-Kindergarten students must be 4 years of age before September 1 of the school year. Their classes will be offered 3 days a week from 9-11:30am.

Registration packets can be picked up at the church office, 521 E Main Street, John Day. The office is open Tuesday-Thursday 9am-3pm. For information call (541) 575-1895 or e-mail Trace at the church e-mail address, judy@johndaynazarene.com

**TENTH ANNUAL FAMILY FUN DAY**

**Saturday, June 17**  
**11am - 3pm**  
**John Day City Park**

**10th Anniversary Raffle Prizes**

- **POOL OPEN - NO CHARGE!** (from 11-2)
- Arts, Crafts & Activity Booths (some activities at a minimal cost)
- Kid's Bike Helmet Exchange—bring your old one—or \$6 each
- **\$1** Hamburgers and Hotdogs
- **\$5 for All Day Waterslide, Dunk Tank, Climbing Wall, Dino Bounce House and GAGA Ball.**
- Receive a raffle ticket with each wristband purchased for 10th Anniversary prizes
- Free Dental Screens
- Puppet Shows by "Percy and Company" – 12:00 pm and 2:00 pm

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Purchase pre-sale wristbands for the inflatables at Families First office

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