

Timber bills get bipartisan nod

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — A trio of bills that seek to end Oregon's "timber wars" have won bipartisan support from state lawmakers, who confirmed the previously negotiated compromises by wide margins.

Senate Bill 1501, which enshrines into law new logging standards agreed upon by timber and environmental groups, passed the Senate 22-5 and the House 43-15 in the waning days of this year's legislative session, which ended Friday, March 4.

A companion bill that provides tax credits to small forestland owners who abide by stricter logging regulations, Senate Bill 1502, was approved unanimously in both chambers.

The Legislature also voted overwhelmingly in favor of Senate Bill 1546, which would implement a new management

strategy for the Elliott State Forest. The 90,000-acre property would remain under state ownership while managed by Oregon State University for forest research and timber harvest.

The three bills must now be signed by Gov. Kate Brown to become law.

Over the past four decades, Oregon's legislative, executive and judicial branches haven't been able to resolve the festering dispute between the timber industry and environmental groups over forest management, said Rep. Ken Helm, D-Beaverton.

"Our institutions were not well-suited to doing that," Helm said.

The recent timber bills are "different animals" because they were brokered by stakeholders ahead of the legislative session, which may serve as a model for resolving other longstanding problems, he said.

"Senate Bill 1501 embod-



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press File

Felled trees are moved in preparation for being cut into log lengths and loaded onto a truck. Three bills that affirm compromises between the timber industry and environmental groups were approved by Oregon lawmakers in the final days of the legislative session that ended Friday, March 4.

ies a monumental, if not historic, agreement for protections for our environment and for certainty for our timber economy," Helm said.

Representatives of timber and environmental groups struck the Private Forest Accord deal in

2021 after a year of talks mediated by the governor's office, which convened the panel to avoid the prospect of competing ballot measures on forestry regulations.

The history behind SB 1501

didn't sit well for lawmakers such as Rep. Christine Goodwin, R-Roseburg, who said she'd vote against the bill to protest the "blackmail" of the timber industry.

"I am opposed to the pressures imposed on our timber industry to accept these compromises," she said. "I'm opposed to the intimidation to accept this accord or else it could be much worse for the timber industry."

The 44-page bill expands no-harvest buffers around streams, implements stricter requirements for road-building, prioritizes non-lethal control of beavers and creates a new modeling system to avoid and mitigate the effects of landslides.

The legislation is expected to set the stage for a federal Habitat Conservation Plan for the state's private forests, which would shield landowners from liability under the Endangered Species Act when harvesting trees.

Several forest product companies and the Oregon Small Woodlands Association signed onto the Private Forest Accord with the understanding that it would provide more regulatory certainty and reduce the likelihood of disruptive lawsuits and ballot initiatives.

The agreement is costly for the timber industry, not only financially but also in terms of its unity, since some companies remain opposed to the new regulations, said Chris Edwards, president of the Oregon Forest & Industries Council.

However, there is too much at stake for the timber industry to roll the dice and move forward without the deal, he said during a legislative hearing on SB 1501.

"At its core, the Private Forest Accord is about protecting a future for forestry in Oregon," Edwards said. "It's also about turning the page on the timber wars of the past."

Bentz draws more challengers in reelection bid

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — A retired U.S. Army colonel from Douglas County, a conservative activist who switched from a race in Arizona and a 2020 candidate for the U.S. Senate in Arizona have filed to run against US Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario.

Bentz is seeking a second two-year term representing the 2nd Congressional District, which covers nearly all of eastern, central and much of southwestern Oregon.

The sprawling, mostly rural area already had a strong Republican tilt that was made even more pronounced under redistricting that extracted northern Deschutes County, the district's largest Democratic enclave, and moved it into the 5th Congressional District.

Joseph Yetter III of Aza-lea in Douglas County filed on Thursday, March 3, with the Oregon secretary of state to run in the Democratic primary in the 2nd Congressional District. He is currently the only Democrat in the race.

Yetter's filing lists him as a physician and farmer. The candidate statement filed with the secretary of state says he

is a retired U.S. Army colonel who served from 1968 to 2004.

Bentz already has two opponents in the Republican primary, both with ties to Arizona politics.

Katherine "Kat" Gallant, a conservative commentator living in Ukiah, in Umatilla County, has been listed as qualified by the Oregon secretary of state to run for the 2nd Congressional District as a Republican.

Gallant had planned to run for the 1st Congressional District in Arizona in 2022. After redistricting maps for both states were finalized, Gallant said she decided to run for the seat in Oregon instead.

Gallant said she was born and raised in Pendleton, lives in Umatilla County, and also has property in Arizona and Utah.

Mike Cavener of Klamath Falls, who lists several nonprofit and political action groups in his career, filed to run for the 2nd district in early January.

Cavener filed to run in the 2020 U.S. Senate special election in Arizona, but withdrew prior to the primary vote, according to the political tracking website Ballotpedia.

Second woman accuses former St. Charles doctor of sex abuse

By GARRETT ANDREWS
The Bulletin

BEND — A second woman has accused a former St. Charles Bend doctor of sexual abuse.

Theodore Braich, a long-time oncologist, is now accused of grabbing the breasts of a 77-year-old patient in 2017, according to a \$700,000 lawsuit filed this week in Deschutes County Circuit Court.

He was sued for \$1 million last summer by a different woman who made similar allegations about a medical exam at St. Charles Bend in 2020.

Braich has denied the claims in the first lawsuit and sought to have that case dismissed. He has yet to be served with the second lawsuit.

"No comment," he said, when reached by phone Tuesday.

It's common once a doctor is accused that other victims come forward, said attorney Greg Kafoury, who is representing both women. He said his firm, Kafoury McDougal, has sued every major hospital system in Oregon.

"Sexual predators are drawn to the medical profession, because it gives them cover," Kafoury said.

"They're dealing with people who are ill or medicated, and the medical professional is cloaked in respectability. They have an opportunity to abuse people with a high degree of impunity."

In the latest lawsuit, the accuser scheduled a consultation with Braich in 2017 to determine if she was taking the appropriate medication. She'd been diagnosed with blood clots in her lungs earlier that year, the lawsuit states.

While seated on the exam table during her appointment, Braich allegedly grabbed the woman's right breast, according to the complaint.

"Shortly thereafter, Defendant Dr. Braich then grabbed plaintiff's left breast, then released

it, standing next to plaintiff and staring blankly for a few moments," the lawsuit states. "Braich then turned abruptly and walked away from the exam table, saying that the examination was over."

The lawsuit states the woman has suffered anxiety as a result of the alleged touching and a reluctance to schedule medical appointments to treat her life-threatening blood clots.

In the earlier case, Braich conducted a new patient exam with a woman on April 15, 2020. During the visit, Braich allegedly inappropriately touched the woman numerous times.

Afterward, she contacted St. Charles Bend to complain about her interactions

with Braich. St. Charles Bend responded with a letter stating it had conducted an internal investigation that included interviewing Dr. Braich about the woman's allegations.

In his response to the lawsuit, Braich denies he engaged in any "deliberate, intentional, unlawful, or deliberately offensive and injurious" touching of the woman.

Braich, 70, does not face criminal charges.

He retired as of Jan. 1, according to records of the Oregon Medical Board.

He earned his medical degree from Oregon Health & Science University in 1979 and was certified in hematology, oncology and internal medicine.

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