

Salmon & Trout group to meet

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) Advisory Committee will meet in Tillamook on Friday, March 25.

The committee will meet from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the ODFW North Coast Watershed District Office, 4907 Third Street, Tillamook. The agenda includes reports on STEP activities and projects and review of mini-grant applications. The meeting is open to the public.

The Committee also will review two proposals to renew STEP propagation programs for Astoria High School and Warrenton High School. The proposals are available for public review on the ODFW website at <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/STEP> and members of the public will be able to comment on the proposals at the meeting or in writing.

On Saturday, March 26, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. the biennial STEP conference will be held in Rockaway Beach. For more information visit the conference website <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/STEP/step-conference.asp>. Registration ends on March 6 so those interested should register soon.

The Oregon Legislature created STEP in 1981 to provide a way for volunteers to participate in the restoration of native stocks of salmon, steelhead and trout. Since then, thousands of volunteers have donated money, materials, equipment and countless hours of labor to improving Oregon fisheries.

The STEP Advisory Committee makes recommendations to ODFW and the Fish and Wildlife Commission on issues regarding its programs. The committee's 13 members are appointed by the Governor and represent all areas of Oregon.

For more information on the Salmon Trout Enhancement Program visit the ODFW Web site at www.dfw.state.or.us/STEP/ or call program staff at 503-947-6211.

Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer, General Manager,
West Oregon Electric Cooperative



Rate Explanation

I would like to address a frequent question I am asked by our members, why are our rates so high? That is a fair question and deserves an answer. The answer would take up half the newspaper to explain as there are several key factors that go into setting our rates, both from a historical perspective and going forward. In order to explain them in as clear and readable manner as possible, I will break them into key factors and spread them out a bit. It will be an education process that I think will be of benefit to everyone, and something each member of the co-op should know.

OHA schedules 28th fundraiser

The Oregon Hunter's Association, Portland Chapter, will hold their 28th annual fundraiser on Saturday, March 5, at the Oregon Zoo, 4001 SW Canyon Rd.

There will be raffles, a live auction, a wall of guns, family

games, a ladies only raffle and more.

With only 300 dinner tickets available, call now to purchase tickets, Leslie Shaw at 503-312-7643 or Don Schaller at 503-646-4733.

Smartraiser is a door-to-door scam

The Oregon Department of Justice has received several complaints about a deceptive company named "Smartraiser" that is soliciting door-to-door in Washington County under the guise of being a charity that helps veterans. Smartraiser is not a charity.

Similar to door-to-door magazine complaints of last summer in which sales crews suggested that buying magazine subscriptions were charitable donations, Smartraiser is soliciting Oregonians to purchase or "donate" money for care packages for U.S. troops serving overseas. A consumer could easily assume that Smartraiser is a charity, but it is not.

Attorney General John Kroger urges Oregonians to research charities by going to www.oregonattorneygeneral.gov and clicking on the link titled "Check on a Charity." All charities soliciting money in Oregon must be registered with the Oregon Department of Justice Charities Section. Smartraiser is not the only scam charity trying to profit off the illusion of

supporting America's service members.

Before paying money to Smartraiser, be aware of the following:

- Smartraiser is not a charity helping troops, but a for-profit company,
- Smartraiser does not offer financial reports detailing the use of the money it receives,
- Unlike a charity, Smartraiser does not disclose what percentage of the money it receives actually goes toward supporting troops and supplying care packages,
- Money given to Smartraiser is not tax-deductible,
- No government body endorses or is associated with Smartraiser.

Attorney General John Kroger and the Oregon Department of Justice are committed to protecting Oregon's marketplace and helping Oregon consumers. If you or someone you know unwittingly donated to a fake charity, please call the Consumer Hotline at 1-877-877-9392 for assistance.

First, let's look at the fact that when West Oregon was formed over 66 years ago, it was created to serve a small group of people that nobody else wanted to deliver power to. There simply was not enough return on the investment it would take to run the lines out to all of the sparsely scattered accounts. Since the investor owned utilities are in the power providing business as just that, an investment, if the numbers didn't create a sufficient return, then there was no motivation to extend the service. The cost factors were and are very significant as the areas we serve cover parts of four different counties, and are so spread apart that the long distances we travel make service work, outages, and maintenance more costly and time consuming. Our service territory is heavily forested, creating more work and maintenance than an urban system, and has difficult terrains to work on, with some accessible only on foot or ATV.

I think I can explain a portion of the effect on our revenue versus expenses, and how much our members pay, like this. The fixed costs of servicing an account, regardless of how much energy is used, contains all of the labor, trucks and other equipment, billing, and our own office expenses. The facility

charge on your power bill, which currently is \$29.50, covers only a small part of the costs of servicing and maintaining our system. When I say a part of these charges, I do mean a small part. If we were to charge what it really costs us to maintain each account, the facility charges would be about \$80 per month, not \$29.50. Realistically each account, like telephone and gas companies do, would pay the full, actual amount of fixed costs. Because we do not charge the full amount of fixed costs, the kilowatt hour charge is higher. Our neighboring utilities have more condensed service areas, with a larger number of consumer accounts, a better balance of commercial and industrial loads compared to residential, and more customers per mile. We have more trees per mile, but they come at a price. as power lines and trees don't mix very well. It is much more cost efficient to serve a dense and compact service area.

Despite these challenges, we, your member owned and operated utility, provide a very good service, are responsive to our members, keep the rates as low as we possibly can, work to keep the lights on under any conditions, and we do so for our members because we are mindful about whom we serve. Being a cooperative, we are a not-for-profit utility that concentrates on providing the best possible service at the best possible price, not on how much profit we need to make to keep our investors happy. It is a difficult challenge here at West Oregon to cover all we need to cover under extreme conditions with very little resources, but we are committed to serving you, our member owners.

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