

Oregon

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ruling, which would give them (OAFB) less time to collect the signatures," said Leah Nelson of the Oregon Seed Council. She noted that 65,000 valid signatures must be turned in to the secretary of state's office by July 8.

Oregon's 800 seed growers and 70 seed companies provide all U.S.-produced ryegrass, bentgrass, Chewings and creeping red fescues, half the U.S.-produced tall fescue and about one-fourth its bluegrass. Between mid-July and the end of September each year, the 800 farmers who grow seed

burn their fields to purge them of the weeds and disease that endanger the grass seeds.

In 1988 when one farmer was burning a field, the wind changed direction and blew smoke across a highway, causing a seven-death, 37-car accident. Since that time, the Oregon seed industry and its Seed Council have been lobbying against proposed field-banning legislation.

The state now allows burning on 250,000 of the 300,000-plus seed-producing acres, and the farmers must pay \$3.50 for every acre they burn.

The state legislature last summer voted down a measure that would have reduced the amount of burning and increased the fee. But Gov. Neil Goldschmidt has joined with one state senator and one representative to write an initiative that, if passed, would by 1995 cut the acreage to 50,000.

The Environmental Quality Commission, which oversees the program, would be allowed to further reduce the maximum acreage or ban burning entirely if it "certifies that an economically feasible, environmentally acceptable alternative exists."

The proposed law would also change the fee structure to include a \$1-to-\$2-per-acre registration fee, and charges of \$2 per acre for propane-flamed burning, \$6 per acre for field burning and \$3 per ton for burning stacks or bales of hay.

Nelson said the initiative would also make stack burning illegal in September 1997, "which would really cripple us."

Opponents of the burning say it poses health and safety dangers and harms the tourism industry.

Nelson said the per-acre fee that farmers pay is used to help fund the Environmental Quality Com-

mission which is supposed to finance research to find new ways to purge the fields.

"But they have spent all the money on the administrative process, so that for two years in a row now there has been no money for research, which is bothering the growers a lot," she said. "We fund somewhere in the neighborhood of \$800,000 a year and they're spending \$750,000 on administration, which we all feel is a bit extravagant."

Despite the delay in the courts, the Seed Council is assuming the Oregonians Against Field Burning will get the necessary signatures on its petition.

Yet, the council discovered in a poll that if the petition musters enough votes by July 8, the industry would win in the November voting if it can effectively show voters how critical it is to the state.

The seed industry employs 10,000 and contributes \$750 million a year to the state.

"If people find out that that money and those jobs will be affected by them voting for the initiative, we have found (in the poll) that they will not support it," Nelson said.

The council has mounted a drive to raise the \$1.5 million to \$2 million it feels it needs for such a campaign.

It is raising funds among the growers, seed dealers, implement dealers, chemical dealers, banking associations, and others who have a relationship with the seed industry.

"We are holding the funds until we find out if the initiative will get on the ballot," Nelson said. "If we wait until July, it's too late to put a campaign together. If they don't get the signatures, we will refund the money we raised from the growers."

Meanwhile, an initiative that would mean an out-and-out ban to field burning is still being circulated. But supporters have gotten only about 21,000 signatures in about one year.

People who wish to contribute to the seed industry campaign can make checks payable to Oregonians for Agriculture at 866 Lancaster SE, Salem, Ore. 97301.

Tax board checking for discrimination

The California tax board is surveying private clubs across the state, reviewing articles of incorporation, bylaws, club regulations and other documents to determine if any are using discriminatory practices.

Club members lose their ability to deduct club-related business expenses on their state tax returns if their club is found to be restricting any service or facility.

The tax board has ruled that separate tee times for men and women is discriminatory. Men's-only grills and card rooms might also be ruled discriminatory.



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