

Wednesday, July 29, 2015

WESTRENDS Board Meeting

The WESTRENDS Board convened on the morning of Wednesday July 29th, 2015 and was led by Senator Ginny Burdick of Oregon. Topics included recreational marijuana and trends in endangered species listing.

The session began with a panel focused on the regulatory framework and taxation strategies of states that have legalized recreational marijuana, lessons learned and ongoing challenges. Karen White, Executive Director of the Western Attorneys General, described her members' position on the topic. The Colorado Department of Revenue's Director of Marijuana Enforcement, Lewis Koski, and Senior Director of Marijuana Enforcement, Ron Kammerzell, discussed Colorado's policies and enforcement strategies.

The presentations continued with views from a local marijuana grower, Jake Salazar, President and CEO of MMJ America, and Amy Margolis from Oregon Cannabis PAC. Ms. Margolis gave an overview of Oregon's efforts to craft marijuana legislation.

The chair then invited Senator Lesil McGuire from Alaska and Senator Linda Evans Parlette from Washington to discuss the implementation of marijuana legalization in their states. The committee discussed the challenges in each state and some of the common challenges across states, in particular the fact that marijuana's designation as illegal under federal law puts state law enforcement in conflict with federal law.

Finally, the committee heard from Nicole Alt, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services Deputy Assistant Director for the Mountain-Prairie Region, on endangered species in western states. Ms. Alt discussed trends in endangered species listing in western states, specifically the sage grouse. Ms. Alt also explained that her agency is streamlining the listing application process.