

Rural Washington county wants to recruit food processors

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Economic development officials in rural Adams County, Wash., want to increase their chances of recruiting food processing companies.

The county, Port of Othello and the nonprofit Adams County Development Council are partnering on an \$83,000 study to explore developing an industrial wastewater treatment facility for the port's Bruce industrial site, about 4 miles east of Othello, Wash.

In recent years, the county has been unsuccessful in recruiting food processing companies into the area due to the lack of infrastructure, said Stephen McFadden, economic development director for the county.

That includes a recent \$350 million dairy-related project that would have created more than 150 jobs, but required a treatment facility capable of handling 1.3 million gallons of wastewater per day.

"There's no such thing in our county," McFadden said.

"In the past two years, we've really begun to recognize that we are infrastructure-poor, in terms of attracting and serving business and industry."

The study will be completed in December. The agencies received \$50,000 from the state Community Economic Revitalization Board, and are sharing the remaining cost. They had their first meeting with engineers last week.

The county owns 90 acres near the industrial park. The study will determine whether it is a feasible site for a plant,

whether another location would better and the best type of design, allowing for growth as new employers are recruited.

McFadden said the agencies want an environmentally sound processing facility.

"We want a facility that will use a water re-use technology," he said. "Waste water will come in from a processor, the plant will treat the water to a much higher quality of water than what is normally sent through a processing plant and then applied to irrigated circles

or sent down the irrigation canal."

The port has more than 260 million gallons of water available per year with the option of expanding to meet future demand, McFadden said.

Adams is one of the smallest counties in the state, and is "distressed" economically, McFadden said.

"We have one industry sector here, really — the industry is agriculture, that's it," he said. "We're prime ag ground, we grow up to 60 different crops each year, depending

on rotation. With open ground and the right planning, we would be a great location for food processors."

McFadden hopes to target East Coast companies expanding into the Pacific Northwest or California companies relocating into a more affordable area.

"We have water, which is very important to anybody, we have cheap ground, we have a new area just opening up here with plots for sale," Doyle Palmer, executive director for the port district, said.

Researchers help nursery industry with new native plant goals

By **SEAN ELLIS**
Capital Press

BOISE — Researchers will try to develop 10 new native plant species for the state's landscape nursery industry over the next two years.

The goal is to find water-conserving native plants that are also aesthetically pleasing, said Ann Bates, administrator of the Idaho Nursery and Landscape Association.

"Native plants are a little bit hard to sell sometimes," she said. "The public may want them but they are not the prettiest plants on the lot. We want to find native plants that are more pleasing to the eye and wanted more by the consumer."

INLA received a \$99,000 specialty crop grant from the Idaho State Department of Agriculture to support the project. University of Idaho researchers Stephen Love and Robert Tripepi are partnering with the nursery association on the project.

Love will collect new native plant germplasm, evaluate it and identify promising native plant species with commercial potential, while Tripepi, who specializes in plant propagation, will build up large numbers of the plant seed to help with the commercialization part of the project.

According to the INLA grant application, there is growing demand for drought-tolerant landscape plants in the Intermountain West but Idaho's nursery crop growers face a disadvantage in competing for this demand due to a lack of suitable plant species and materials.

The key is to find native plants that are pleasing to the eye and that consumers will want, Love said.

"We're not looking for something that looks like sagebrush ... or cactus," he said. "We're trying to find plants that create a very unique and very beautiful landscape."

The project will "infuse new, sustainable plant products into the Idaho nursery industry," according to the grant application. "The short-term impact will be competitive placement of the Idaho nursery industry among increasingly conservation-minded customers."

The long-term impact would be an "increase in water-conserving urban landscape designs that will decrease water usage, thereby preserving a limited resource for food production and other critical needs."

Tripepi said he will use tissue cultures and stem cuttings to build up large populations of the targeted plants to sell to nurseries.

UI's native plant project has been around since 2005, funded partly by the INLA, but the \$99,000 grant will significantly expand the scope and speed of it, Love said.

Besides bringing in Tripepi, who will help propagate some of the more difficult plants, the money will also be used to recruit a master's level student to assist him.

Love said researchers should "fairly easily reach that goal" of developing 10 new native plant species over two years.

Time runs out for Oregon timber ballot initiatives

Proposed initiatives would have restricted logging, pesticide spraying

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

Three ballot initiatives that would have restricted clear-cutting and aerial spraying in Oregon have failed to qualify for the November general election.

One of the petitions, which would have imposed new limits on aerial pesticide applications, was able to obtain the Oregon Supreme Court's approval for its ballot title language.

However, that didn't leave enough time for supporters to collect about 88,000 valid signatures by the July 8 deadline.

The state's highest court has yet to rule on the ballot title for another petition that would restrict aerial spraying and logging in landslide-prone areas.

A third petition to prohibit clear-cut timber harvests was withdrawn by supporters because of legal complications involving forestland property value laws.



Joshua Bessex/EO Media Group

The state Department of Forestry keeps a 100-foot buffer along the Nehalem River below the Home-steader timber sale in the Buster Creek Basin. A ballot initiative that would have banned clear-cutting in Oregon has failed to qualify for the November general election, along with two other proposed measures to restrict aerial spraying.

Steve Pedery, a chief petitioner for all three proposals, said the application process was started late and further hindered by legal challenges from the timber industry.

"Once we ended up in the court process, the clock was probably going to run out on us," said Pedery, who is also conservation director for the Oregon Wild

environmental nonprofit.

However, Pedery said he's pleased the Oregon Supreme Court has approved the ballot title for one of the initiative petitions, since such language is now likely to stand in future elections.

Oregon Wild is taking a long-term interest in enacting timber reforms, possibly with initiatives on the 2018

or 2020 ballots, said Pedery.

Oregonians for Food & Shelter, an agribusiness group, is glad the "extreme and damaging measures" won't be on the November ballot, but it's likely the issues will be revived, said Scott Dahlman, its policy director.

Similar ideas will also probably surface in the Oregon leg-

islature again next year, Dahlman said.

Lawmakers rejected such proposals during the 2015 legislative session in favor of a "more reasoned approach" once they learned about their negative consequences, he said.

"We think the people of Oregon would do the same if they were educated on the issue," Dahlman said.

Supporters of proposed bans on aerial spraying in Lincoln and Lane counties are currently gathering signatures for ballot initiatives, he said.

However, time is running short for the Lincoln County effort while the deadline has passed for the Lane County petition to qualify for the November ballot, Dahlman said. Either petition could also qualify for the May 2017 election.

Sara Duncan, public affairs director for the Oregon Forest & Industries Council, said the timber industry has made great technological improvements to prevent off-site spray drift.

Aside from a few high-profile incidents, pesticide spraying in forestry has proven to be safe, she said.

"We already have stringent rules and regulations," Duncan said.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

A customer gathers peaches sold by Hughson, Calif.-based J&J Ramos Farms during a peach festival July 24 in Elk Grove, Calif. The festival is one of several held this summer to tout California's role as the nation's top peach producer.

Festivals promote California's peach-production prowess

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

ELK GROVE, Calif. — Hundreds of people gathered on a warm Sunday morning recently to celebrate all things peach.

At the first annual Peach Festival on July 24 in Elk Grove's old town, people took part in games, a pie-eating contest, a chef's demonstration and other activities and sampled and bought fresh peaches from numerous local farms.

The event helped promote a new year-round farmers' market that debuted here in May.

"I think it's a great idea," said Caitlyn Legan of Hughson, Calif.-based J&J Ramos Farms, which had a steady line of customers buying its peaches. "It makes it a lot busier. There are a lot more people."

The event was one of several peach festivals held in the Sacramento area this summer by the Living Smart Founda-

tion, which sponsors 11 farmers' markets in the area. Similar festivals have been held in Carmichael and Folsom, and another is planned for Aug. 6 in Roseville.

"California is the No. 1 producer of peaches in the nation," foundation co-founder Marie Hall said. "I wanted to bring light to that and enable people to be engaged by our growers."

California produces most of the nation's peaches, with a 2016 crop forecast at 580,000 tons, up 4 percent from 2015, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service. That was to include 320,000 tons of clingstone and 260,000 tons of freestone, both up from last season.

This year's crop was rated as good in all areas of the state, helped by increases in surface-water deliveries to growers because of the wet winter, according to NASS. Mid-season peaches are in the middle of harvest, the agency reports.

"Peaches are everywhere, from the south all the way north and to the west and east," Hall said.

The peach festivals are part of a growing effort by the organization to promote local crops. Next year, the group plans to hold two-day festivals to highlight peaches, strawberries and stone fruit, Hall said.

The July 24 event was a hit with growers, including Ray Aoyama, whose Parlier, Calif.-based Aoyama Farms has been selling at farmers' markets since 1979.

"It's wonderful," Aoyama said.

The festival was also popular with vendors who didn't have peaches.

"I have peachy deals, and it's a peachy good day," said Jody Shepard, whose business, Naturific, was selling cooking salts and other wares in a booth at the market.

"I love the peach festival," she said. "It's a wonderful way to bring people out and enjoy the day."

Water Board OKs \$7.2M for E. Idaho aquifer recharge

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

The Idaho Water Resource Board will invest \$7.2 million in construction improvements to boost recharge flows for replenishing the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer.

Improvements to three recharge sites — near Shoshone, Eden and Burley — would provide for a projected total of 140,000 acre-feet per year of winter recharge water, said Wesley Hipke, recharge project manager for the Idaho Department of Water Resources.

All of the sites have conducted recharge in the past, but only the site near Shoshone — the Milepost 31 project — has recharged over the winter. Recharge at the other two sites has only occurred in the fall and spring and at variable rates, he said.

The Water Board was able to recharge almost 67,000 acre-feet last winter, including an estimated 7,000 acre-feet through Twin Falls Canal Co., but its ultimate goal is to recharge 250,000 acre-feet annually.

Aquifer levels have been declining since the 1950s, with the aquifer losing 6.1 million acre-feet between 2008 and 2013, Hipke said.

"This is a really big ship to turn around," he said.

The just-approved funding includes \$4.5 million for improvements on the North Side Canal Co. system to bypass four hydro plants to route water to Wilson Lake near Eden for winter recharge. In the past, recharge has been limited to spring and fall due to potential damage from freezing tempera-

tures, Hipke said.

The project will allow for delivery of 130 cubic feet per second. Based on a winter recharge period of 120 days, the project would provide 31,000 acre-feet of water on an annual basis, he said.

The Water Board also approved \$1.8 million to fund a new check dam and larger gates at its own recharge site at Milepost 31 near Shoshone. The project will double current recharge capacity to 400 cubic feet per second, which would raise projected recharge delivery to 96,000 acre-feet annually, he said.

Another \$600,000 was approved to enhance a new pipeline being built by Northwest Idaho Irrigation District near Burley to allow for winter recharge. The pipeline is being built to allow the district to use surface water from the Snake River for summer irrigation to reduce groundwater pumping, he said.

The pipeline is estimated to cost \$15 million, and the Water Board's funding is for additions to the pipeline to set up injection wells and ensure the system would work under winter conditions. The project would allow for 54 cubic feet per second of winter recharge for an annual recharge delivery of 13,000 acre-feet, he said.

Construction on all three projects is set to begin in the fall.

"By increasing the capacity at Milepost 31 and recharging all winter long at North Side Canal Company and Southwest Irrigation District, we are more than doubling our winter-time capacity," Hipke said.



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Wesley Hipke, right, recharge project manager for Idaho Department of Water Resources, talks with Idaho Water Resource Board member Vince Alberdi, left, and Water Board Chairman Roger Chase during a tour of a recharge project north of Shoshone this spring.