

Subscribe to our weekly Idaho email newsletter at CapitalPress.com/newsletters

Idaho

Group focuses on recharge credits

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

BOISE — A special Idaho Water Users Association work group aims to resurrect legislation creating a system of mitigation credits for Eastern Snake Plain aquifer recharge efforts.

Water users had a series of meetings on the topic and drafted a bill they hoped to introduce during the 2014 legislative session. Idaho Department of Water Resources Planning Bureau Chief Brian Patton explained the consensus “fell apart” at the last minute, due largely to concerns of some participants that the bill had the potential to open new agricultural land to irrigation.

The current bid to pass recharge credit legislation originated in November, when the water association’s executive director, Norm Semanko, asked his legislative committee if there was any interest in revisiting the concept, Patton said. The work group that the legislative committee assigned to draft a bill met on Dec. 17 and is scheduled to meet again on Jan. 20, before the association’s annual meeting in Boise.

Lynn Tominaga, executive director of Idaho Groundwater Appropriators, Inc., said the work group will consider two proposals during the up-



Submitted by the Idaho Department of Water Resources
Winter aquifer recharge is conducted recently at American Falls Reservoir District No. 2’s Milepost 31 recharge site. A work group has been assigned to draft a bill for the Idaho Legislature to implement an aquifer recharge credit system for the Eastern Snake Plain.

coming meeting — one that would allow mitigation credits for new municipal, commercial and industrial uses and another that would also allow credits for those uses plus supplemental water for current irrigated agricultural land. He said the majority of work group members support using credits for new municipal, commercial and industri-

al irrigation. The group plans to solicit an opinion from the attorney general about the legality of its intentions to prohibit credits from opening new irrigated agricultural land.

IDWR Deputy Director Mat Weaver said the department supported the failed draft legislation and acknowledges the importance of es-

establishing a credit system.

Idaho Water Board Chairman Roger Chase said the concept of a recharge credit system has merit, provided that it doesn’t place additional demands on the aquifer.

“Breaking out new land concerns me, and using credits to break out new land concerns me a lot,” Chase said.

Lynn Harmon, manager

of American Falls Reservoir District No. 2, believes the goal of any aquifer recharge project should be to stabilize an Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer that’s declining by 200,000 acre-feet per year on average.

“I still feel that the major portion of any recharge should go to the aquifer rehabilitation, not new uses — say 10 percent for new use and the other 90 percent for rehabilitation,” Harmon suggested.

Patton envisions that a recharge credit system could coexist with the state’s current project to pay water managers fees to recharge the aquifer during winter months using a state recharge water right.

In the first year of conducting winter recharge, Patton said 25,000 acre-feet of water has been injected into the aquifer thus far, mostly through the Milner-Gooding Canal, operated by AFRD No. 2. The state shared costs with the district in building its new Milepost 31 recharge site. Patton said improvements are also underway to access roads along that canal. Twin Falls Canal Co. is also participating in winter recharge.

Patton said winter recharge has gone well, and innovations such as submersible pumps to keep headgates from freezing over have helped.

Potato Lovers Month to span 8 weeks

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

EAGLE, Idaho — The Idaho Potato Commission’s Potato Lovers Month promotion will be extended to eight weeks this season to help shippers spread out the increased demand.

The world’s largest annual produce display contest, in its 24th year, used to span the month of February. This year, however, it will run from Jan. 12 through March 13.

Seth Pemsler, IPC’s retail/international vice president, expects to grow the event from last season’s 5,000 retail store and military commissary entries.

Prior to Potato Lovers Month, February was historically a slow month for potato sales, following the holiday rush.

Last February, the combination of increased fresh shipments for the promotion and challenging weather contributed to supply problems that forced stores to scale back their displays or not to participate at all, Pemsler said. Nonetheless, Pemsler said Idaho spud shipments were up 9 percent last February compared with February of 2012.

“Last year, there was so much demand during the four week period of Potato Lovers Month that it could not be met,” said Lynn Wilcox, a fresh potato supplier with Wilcox Fresh in Rexburg and an Idaho Potato Commission member. “We had one very large customer in particular who was short product. That customer precluded other customers from even getting product.”

By extending the length of the event, Wilcox said, IPC will enable shippers to stagger when customers are active in the promotion. Wilcox said the longer promotion will also limit the accumulation of potato cartons as shippers process enough crop through their sheds to fill consumer bags with smaller spuds.

“(The promotion) definitely helps to move the crop, and hopefully we can generate enough interest to even raise prices a little bit,” Wilcox said.

Oakley grower Randy Hardy, chairman of Sun Valley Potato Growers, Inc., believes an extended Potato Lovers Month will be especially useful this season, given that Idaho’s crop profile was heavy in smaller spuds, making consumer bags abundant. Hardy also likes that the promotion will now encompass Super Bowl demand.

IPC will send out about 20,000 kits with materials to build displays featuring Idaho potatoes and the promotion’s partner, Hormel Real Bacon Bits. Hormel shares in the cost of the promotion, which Pemsler expects will be up somewhat from last year’s roughly \$500,000 budget.

Researchers test benefit of drip-irrigated mint

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

PARMA, Idaho — Field trials meant to test the viability of growing mint on a drip irrigation system have shown some promise but researchers say the ultimate conclusion is still pending.

Mint irrigated with a drip system outperformed mint irrigated with a furrow system during the first year of the trial in 2013 but the furrow-irrigated mint returned the favor this year.

University of Idaho researchers said this year’s outcome was probably the result of using too little water. Mint grown on a drip system at UI’s Parma experiment station was given 12 inches of water this year, while the furrow-irrigated mint received 30 inches.

“Mint is a pretty thirsty plant and ... I really think we didn’t apply enough water on our drip mint this year,” said Parma superintendent Jim Barbour.

Jerry Neufeld, UI’s Canyon County Extension educator, said he wouldn’t read too much into this year’s results given the amount of water applied to the drip-irrigated mint.

“It’s too early to draw any conclusions,” he said. “I think it’s promising but we have to give it some time for us to get results.”

Nampa farmer Robert McKellip became the first Idaho grower to put mint on a drip system in 2012 and a few others have followed suit.

McKellip, president of the Idaho Mint Growers Association, said he has reduced the water usage on his drip-irrigated mint by half, is using 30 to

40 percent less fertilizer and his yields have increased 10 to 20 percent, compared with his furrow-irrigated mint fields.

“Every year I put more mint acres under drip,” he said. “It’s a little expensive but I’ve had really good results.”

McKellip puts about 25 inches of water on his drip mint and 50 on his furrow mint. He believes the Parma trials will ultimately prove the value of drip-irrigated mint but it will take some time.

“There’s a lot of interest in it,” he said. “Before a new idea is going to be accepted, you have to prove it’s better than the old way of doing it.”

Caldwell farmer Tony Weitz, chairman of the Idaho Mint Commission, irrigates his onions with a drip system and he said drip-irrigated mint looks promising and is something he would consider using.

However, he’s concerned about the longevity of the drip tape because in mint fields, it’s left in the ground for several years.

“My biggest concern is how the tape will hold up after being in the ground for several years,” he said. “I think it’s a good concept (but) I’m worried about the longevity.”

That and other possible issues like gophers are concerns the Parma trials are meant to address, Neufeld said.

Gophers are a major problem in alfalfa fields and he has advised farmers not to use drip systems in alfalfa because they can cut right through the tape if their tunnels are perpendicular to it.

“I don’t think gophers will be as big of a problem in mint but we don’t know that yet,” he said.

Materne’s new Idaho factory buying Washington apples

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

NAMPA, Idaho — The Materne North America applesauce plant that located in Idaho last year has begun trials on its first production line and is already purchasing apples from Washington.

Idaho apple growers say the facility hasn’t purchased from them yet but are hopeful that will change when the plant gets up and running.

John George, vice president of manufacturing for Materne, told the Capital press in an email in December that the facility is “in the process of actual first production.”

Materne, which makes GoGo squeeZ Applesauce, announced last February it would build its second U.S. processing facility in Nampa.

Materne officials said the \$85 million Nampa facility is expected to eventually produce 60 percent of the company’s U.S. products.

George said the facility is now purchasing apples from Washington, and the site’s proximity to the nation’s major apple producing region “was one of the primary drivers for locating out in that region.”

Idaho growers said that although the facility hasn’t started purchasing Idaho apples, they are hopeful that will happen eventually.

“I would assume they will when they’re set up and ready to go,” said Jamie Mertz, co-owner of Symms Fruit Ranch, one of Idaho’s largest apple producers.



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Apples hang from a tree in an orchard near Caldwell, Idaho, in October. Idaho growers are hopeful that Materne North America’s new Nampa applesauce facility will soon start purchasing apples from the Gem State.

Idaho produces about 70 million pounds of apples a year and most of the state’s orchards are located close to the Nampa area.

“We do have quite a bit of apples here,” Mertz said. “I would think we could supply quite a bit of (their needs).”

George said members of Materne’s procurement team have been meeting with Idaho growers.

“Clearly it is in our best interest to get the fruit from as close to the plant as possible,” he said.

George told the Capital

Press last year that the company plans to source apples from Idaho and the entire Northwest region.

Kirk Mayer, former manager of the Washington Growers Clearing House Association, which represents 2,000 tree fruit growers, said Materne’s purchasing foray into Washington would be great news for the state’s apple growers, especially this year.

Washington produced a record 155 million boxes of fresh apples this year, well above the previous record of 129 million, he said.



DRIFT REDUCTION AGENT

- Increases droplet retention
- Does not alter spray viscosity
- Helps prevent droplet bounce
- Not susceptible to pump shear
- Greatly reduces drift-able fines
- Increases pesticide effectiveness
- Non-petroleum crop based ingredients

CONTROL



DRIFT

NO NEED TO PREMIX WITH PESTICIDE

Typical use rate	16-24oz/100g
------------------	--------------

“Another product that really works!”

(800)440-3503
info@agsprayinc.com



AGRICULTURAL SOLUTIONS

BUYING 6" and UP
Alder, Maple, Cottonwood
Saw Logs, Standing Timber

Chehalis, WA • Philomath, OR • Rainier, OR
Darrell Alvord Ken Jones Tom Layton
360-431-0421 • WA 360-520-6491 • WA 360-880-2656 • OR




www.cascadehardwood.com

Max Yield

From the Ground Up

Soil preparation equipment from TG Schmeiser is engineered to provide maximum productivity per acre. Versatile implements till, mulch, cultivate and firm the soil for optimum seed germination.



Schmeiser Till an' Bedder™

Better soil prep for a higher yield

T. G. SCHMEISER®
1-800-288-8128 • www.tgschmeiser.com