

New farm bill program benefiting farms, ranches

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

POCATELLO, Idaho — A new federal conservation grant included in the 2014 Farm Bill will benefit ranchers diverting from Idaho's upper Blackfoot River and Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer groundwater irrigators.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which replaced previous farm bill programs including the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, has awarded \$388 million nationwide for 115 cooperative conservation projects, with outside partners promising another \$800 million in matching funds.

Idaho received \$430,000 through the grant, administered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, to replace a pair of irrigation diversions that stymie fish passage across the main-stem Blackfoot River through Caribou County and \$1.1 million to address declining groundwater levels in the aquifer.

Travis Thomason, acting Idaho NRCS state conservationist, said the grant was competitive, drawing 600 proposals with a combined \$2.1 billion in requests.

"Really that told us there's a lot of interest in working with partnerships to move conservation along," Thomason said.

The applicant for the upper Blackfoot projects — a coa-



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Matt Woodard, right, speaks on behalf of Trout Unlimited during a press conference on a recently awarded farm bill grant to replace two irrigation diversions blocking fish passage in the Blackfoot River in Idaho. Warren Colyer, left, also with TU, listens.

lition involving three mining companies, Trout Unlimited and the Idaho Conservation League called the Upper Blackfoot Confluence — contributed \$750,000 toward replacing the old diversions, owned by ranchers Keith Hunsaker and Kent Allen.

Matt Woodard, with TU, said a conservation team with his organization determined in a 2011 assessment "all conditions were still on the ground for success" in the Blackfoot watershed, even though native Yellowstone cutthroat trout populations have been "hammered back."

Keith Allred, a former candidate for Idaho governor who serves as UBC's facilitator, said

the coalition has already replaced ranchers' diversions on two upper Blackfoot tributaries, opening up 25 miles of new cutthroat spawning habitat, with supplemental funding from other NRCS programs.

Thanks to UBC, Joan Bunderson, managing partner with Bear Lake Cattle Co., said she has two new diversions that keep fish out of her fields, don't clog and have a gauge to ensure she's diverting within her water right, in compliance with a new state requirement.

"It's been a benefit to us at the same time as it's been a benefit to wildlife," Bunderson said. Design work on the main-



Courtesy of Matt Woodard

Caribou County, Idaho, rancher Kent Allen's diversion across the upper Blackfoot River is planned for replacement with funding from a new 2014 Farm Bill program, called the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Idaho received RCPP funding to replace two Blackfoot diversions and to address declining Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer levels.

stem diversions should begin this summer, with project completion expected by 2017.

The Idaho Water Resources Board secured a two-year RCPP grant. A host of partners — Miller-Coors, General Mills, groundwater users' organizations, the Wood River Land Trust, TU, the Nature Conservancy, the Idaho Department of Water Resources, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and others — have committed

to providing matching funding and technical assistance, worth \$800,000 per year.

Nealy Miller, IDWR senior water resource planner, said the grant will target projects such as building infrastructure to allow farmers to use groundwater in lieu of surface water in wet years, improving the efficiency of flood irrigation, removing end guns from pivots, pivot enhancements and water conservation in the Thousand Springs

area. He said funding from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program will support grant projects, such as providing payment for irrigators who remove end guns.

Miller said the board will be working with NRCS in February to finalize a cooperative agreement and will start accepting grower sign-ups in the spring, with projects likely commencing during the summer.

Bird control fireworks bill moves to House floor

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Legislation that would expand the use of fireworks to repel birds in Oregon is headed for a vote on the House floor.

House Bill 2432, which would broaden the use of fireworks beyond protecting crops and forest products, moved to the House floor with a unanimous "do pass" recommendation from the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources on Feb. 3.

The bill would allow the state fire marshal to issue permits for using fireworks at golf courses, landfills, airports, seafood facilities and other properties, in addition to farms and forests.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal stopped issuing fireworks permits for golf courses and landfills to scare off geese and other birds in 2010, after it was brought to the agency's attention that such uses were limited by law to farms and forests, said Anita Phillips, license

and permits manager for the agency.

The bill would clarify the law and allow the state agency to again issue such permits, she said.

The agency doesn't expect more than 50 additional applications as a result of the change, Phillips said.

Representatives of the Oregon Farm Bureau, the Humane Society of the United States and the Oregon Humane Society all urged committee members to support the legislation, though

they mentioned some concerns.

Animal advocates said that fireworks must be used responsibly because they can frighten pets, while the Oregon Farm Bureau noted there are only two wholesale fireworks dealers who can sell to farmers and other property owners in the state.

During the hearing, the committee also moved House Bill 2475, which would authorize penalties of up to \$100 for veterinarians who commit minor infractions, to the floor

with a "do pass" recommendation.

The fines would be the equivalent of a "traffic ticket" for minor violations, such as failing to notify regulators of an address change, that would not reflect negatively on a veterinarian's disciplinary record, said Lori Makinen, director of the Oregon Veterinary Medical Examining Board.

The committee held a hearing on another bill — House Bill 2474 — that would require the registration and reg-







ulation of veterinary facilities to ensure they meet state standards.

Currently, state regulators only have authority over veterinarians, not facilities, which could create problems if substandard conditions were found at a clinic owned by a corporation or non-veterinarian, said Makinen.

However, the committee held off on referring the bill to the House floor pending further discussion and possible amendments.

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	4 Air Induction (AI/AIC)	Single	Very Coarse VC to Extremely Coarse XC	2,4-D/Roundup®/Dicamba
	5 Air Induction Turbo TwinJet (AITTJ60)	Twin	Very Coarse VC to Extremely Coarse XC	Roundup®/Dicamba
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