

Winery waste water regs raise concerns

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

KENNEWICK, Wash. — Winery owners are concerned about the state Department of Ecology’s plan to regulate waste water discharged by wineries.

Costs and the scope of regulation could put some wineries out of business, winery owners told DOE officials at a session on the subject at the annual meeting of the Washington Association of Wine Grape Growers at the Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick, Feb. 10.

Bill Moore and Chelsea Desforges, DOE water quality specialists, said that is not DOE’s intent, but that the agency is concerned about protecting surface and ground water because of a proliferation of wineries,

mostly in Eastern and Central Washington. California and Oregon have regulations, they said.

Washington wineries have largely done a good job of managing waste water but there is potential for problems, they said. They talked about preliminary permit plans, answered questioned and listened to wineries’ concerns.

Thirteen of the state’s larger wineries have individual waste water discharge permits, each tailored to their operations, Desforges said. DOE wants to draft a general permit for smaller wineries, she said.

DOE is concerned with loss of oxygen in surface water from the amount of oxygen needed to break down waste water that includes cleaning agents, grape juice and organic sediment from the washing of tanks, crush



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Bill Moore, Washington Department of Ecology water quality specialist, listens to John Morgan, owner of Lost River Winery, Mazama, following a session on proposed winery waste water regulations at the Washington Association of Wine Grape Growers annual meeting in Kennewick, Feb. 10.

pads, barrels and winery floors. Loss of oxygen in streams puts aquatic life at risk, she said.

There’s also potential for contamination of ground water, the source of much drinking

water, if too much untreated waste water is used in irrigation, leaks from unlined evaporation lagoons or comes from failing septic systems, Desforges said.

Stuart Childs, senior scientist of Kennedy/Jenks Consultants, a Portland engineering firm, said small wineries sometimes run their waste water through domestic septic systems but that those systems aren’t designed for heavy loads from grape crush and usually end up failing. Larger system are built just for wineries, he said.

“A really good winery produces two gallons of waste water per gallon of wine. But six is more common and so is 10,” Childs said.

A 10-ton crush produces 3,000 to 15,000 gallons of waste water, he said.

The state produces about 20 million gallons of wine annually and, at an average of six gallons of waste water per gallon of wine, that’s 120 million gallons of waste water.

Irrigation, winery septic systems, evaporation lagoons and use of publicly owned treatment plants are all options, Desforges said. A double-lined evaporation pond with leak detection would be exempt from a permit, Moore said.

John Morgan, owner of Lost River Winery in Mazama, voiced concerns and asked for help, saying he has two systems and needs to install a third.

One winery owner said DOE needs to learn more since some small wineries do all their crush at once to minimize cleaning and do different things in different locations.



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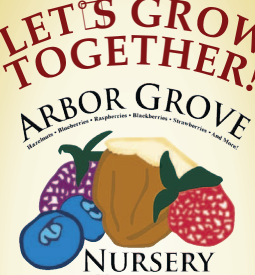
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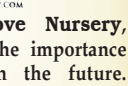


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LIBERTY AG ISSUES TEAM HONORED AT SPOKANE AG EXPO



The Liberty FFA agricultural issues team accepts the Excellence in Agriculture award at the Spokane Ag Expo and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum February 3, 2015.

SPOKANE — Eastern Washington FFA students took home top honors at the Spokane Ag Expo and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum this year.

The Liberty FFA agricultural issues team, from the Liberty School District in Spangle, Wash., received the Excellence in Agriculture for youth from Greater Spokane Inc.'s AgriBusiness Council, for their efforts researching the impacts of drones in agriculture.

The award is meant to honor youth and businesses or individuals who make a significant and positive influence on agriculture in the region. Washington Sen. Mark Schoesler received the individual award.

Liberty students Devin Billington, Nathan Burley, Abby Karlis, Christine Denny, Bridgette Roll, Kaitlyn Rambo and Meghan Grumbly presented their topics to organizations and companies. They won locally and at the FFA's state convention in May 2014, going on to be silver award winners at the national FFA convention in October 2014.

The chapter has 10 years of experience identifying issues for research and presentations, said agribusiness council chair Jay Allert.

"What a great experience for them to learn about the subject and then to go out and present it in a professional manner," he said. "It's very impressive."

Liberty FFA Adviser Kyle Kimble said the students

look for an agricultural issue that affects the Pacific Northwest region each year.

Drones were suggested in February 2013, and the team began looking for information in the fall.

The students met with Robert Blair, a farmer in Kendrick, Idaho, who has long been a proponent of using unmanned aerial vehicles in agriculture, and with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife officials.

The students might have come to their own conclusions on using drones, Kimble said, but have to remain totally neutral for the presentation, presenting both pros and cons equally.

The chapter tries to present to 10-15 local forums in Eastern Washington, Kimble said. Groups would ask the students questions about the topic.

"We learn a lot at those presentations," Kimble said.

It's the chapter's fifth state championship in eight years, Kimble said, now in his 13th year as an adviser.

"It's a tradition at Liberty," he said. "They put forth a lot of effort and time, and usually reap the rewards. It's a validation of their efforts."

The chapter's current agricultural issues team is working on federal crop insurance. That team will be available to present to local forums, Kimble said.



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