



Courtesy of Frank Callahan, Native Plant Society

Giant cane is seen growing near the Talent area in Oregon. A bill proposed in the Oregon House of Representatives would require those growing the plant as a fuel stock post a minimum \$1 million bond to pay for eradication should it spread beyond its plot.

## Bill would require giant cane growers post \$1 million bond

### Critics fear the biomass crop will become invasive

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI

SALEM — Farmers who grow giant cane, a plant used for bioenergy production, would be subject to bond requirements and potential penalties under legislation proposed in Oregon.

Under House Bill 2183, producing up to 400 acres of giant cane would require filing a \$1 million surety bond with the Oregon Invasive Species Council, an entity within the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Planting a larger parcel of the species *Arundo donax* would require filing a surety bond of \$25,000 per acre.

The money would pay for removing the plants that spread beyond the plot and ODA could also impose civil penalties of up to \$25,000 for violations of bond conditions.

Supporters of the legislation fear that giant cane will become an invasive weed to the detriment of Oregon's environment by crowding out other plants.

"It will inevitably escape control if planted on an industrial scale," said Billy Don Robinson, vice president of the Native Plant Society of Oregon, who testified during a March 3 hearing of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Spraying the plant with an herbicide such as glyphosate won't necessarily prevent its resurgence, as the chemical may not kill inactive tubers that can remain viable for several years, Robinson said.

"It's a real ticking time bomb down in the ground," he said.

The concern over *Arundo donax* stems from trials conducted by Portland General Electric, which is examining the use of the plant as a feedstock for power generation.

PGE will stop using coal at its power plant in Boardman, Ore., in 2020 and is

considering giant cane as a replacement, said Brendan McCarthy, government affairs analyst for the company.

Rather than shutter the facility, modifying it to use biomass would preserve jobs in area and allow PGE to keep it as an asset, he said.

The aggressive, fast-growing qualities that make giant cane attractive as a feedstock also make it a potential invasive species, McCarthy said.

Ironically, PGE has reduced its trials of *Arundo donax* because the plant hasn't performed as well as expected due to frost kill and other issues, he said.

PGE doesn't believe that HB 2183 is necessary, as the company is taking precautions to prevent the plant's escape, he said.

Growers and harvesters must comply with "sanitation check lists" such as baling the crop and cleaning trucks after hauling it, McCarthy said.

"We've been extraordinarily careful about how we've started growing this plant," he said. "Due to our project, I think we've improved our state's knowledge of this species."

ODA is not taking a position on the bill but Katy Coba, the agency's director, noted that *Arundo donax* is already subject to restrictions under its "control area" authority for potential pests and diseases.

For example, anyone who wants to grow the crop must provide ODA with a map of where it will be planted and keep the plant away from waterways, she said. Parcels must also be monitored for three years to ensure eradication.

PGE has also filed a \$1 million bond with ODA for its existing trials, she said.

Committee chair Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, said the testimony of HB 2183's supporters "has succeeded in alarming me."

Further hearings will be held on the bill to get input from scientists at Oregon State University and ODA,

# Customers remain committed to Idaho wheat despite 2014 losses

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — Major Idaho wheat customers remain committed to the state's growers despite the significant losses in 2014 caused by heavy August rains, Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Blaine Jacobson told lawmakers March 2.

Jacobson said the wettest August in parts of Southern and Eastern Idaho since 1953 caused an estimated \$210 million in losses to Idaho's wheat and barley crops, with wheat accounting for about two-thirds of that total.

Idaho produces a consistent crop every year and the state's wheat customers understand last year's losses were a rare event, he said.

"These companies come to Idaho because of the consistency of our harvest" and they understand "it's been 60-some years since we had something like that," he told members of the House Agricultural Affairs Committee.

IWC commissioner Ned Moon told the Capital Press that millers helped Idaho growers survive the losses by using as much of the damaged wheat as they could while still meeting their quality parameters.



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Wheat is harvested in a Southwestern Idaho field last July. Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Blaine Jacobson told lawmakers March 2 the state's wheat customers remain committed to Idaho growers despite major losses last year caused by heavy August rains.

He said the rains were devastating but the industry's customers "did everything they possibly could in order to make it work."

Moon said that included using some wheat with lower falling number test scores, which measure wheat quality, than they normally would.

"They didn't run away from us," said IWC commissioner Gordon Gallup. "They definitely worked with us."

Jacobson said buyers did everything they could to use as much of that damaged wheat as possible.

"They wanted to keep the growers healthy so that the industry would bounce back this year," he said.

Jacobson said the 2014 losses have also impacted the commission's fiscal year 2015 budget. The approved budget is \$3.2 million but the commission will end up spending

only about \$2.8 million in fiscal 2015 because of reduced revenue from the state's wheat assessment.

And by the end of this year, the commission's \$3.8 million reserve is expected to decrease to about \$3.4 million.

Despite the 2014 losses, wheat remained the state's second largest crop in terms of revenue with \$732 million in cash receipts last year, Jacobson said.

## Calif. manual survey shows 5% of normal snowpack

By TIM HEARDEN  
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Snow in the Sierra Nevada last weekend may have excited ski and snowboard enthusiasts, but it did little for California's pitiful snowpack.

The state Department of Water Resources' third manual snow survey of the season on March 3 turned up just 0.9 inches of water content, or 5 percent of average for the date, at a snow course 90 miles east of here.

The department's electronic readings found the water content of the northern Sierra snowpack at 4.4 inches on March 3, or 16 percent of average for the date, while the statewide snow water equivalent average of 5 inches was 19 percent of normal.

Most of the DWR's 103 electronic sensors are at higher elevations than the snow courses where chief of snow surveys Frank Gehrke and other officials take readings, so they tend to receive more snow, the agency explained in a news release.

The snow survey followed a weekend system that brought heavy downpours to Southern California, light showers to the Central Valley and 12 to 18 inches of snow in parts of the Sierra Nevada.

But much of California saw a historically dry January, and even the early-season and February storms



Courtesy of Calif. Dept. of Water Resources

Frank Gehrke, the California Department of Water Resources' chief of snow surveys, measures snow depth for the agency's third manual snow survey of the season March 3 at Echo Summit east of Sacramento.

that improved reservoir levels and pushed up communities' rainfall totals didn't produce much snow.

Sacramento is only slightly below its normal seasonal rainfall total, registering 13.22 inches since Oct. 1 while it averages 13.63 inches for the period, according to the National Weather Service. But electronic snowpack readings in the central and southern Sierra on March 3 came in at 20 percent and 22 percent of normal, respectively, the DWR reported.

Snowpack levels are a key factor in determining the year's state and federal water allocations, as they give an indication for how much runoff will fill reservoirs in the spring and summer months. For the second straight year, farmers without senior water rights who rely on federal

get non this year, while the DWR has set its allocation at 20 percent of requested deliveries.

Only in 1991 was the water content lower than this year in early March, registering 18 percent of normal statewide, but there's little hope the state can repeat the "miracle March" that dramatically improved conditions that year.

The federal Climate Prediction Center foresees warmer-than-normal temperatures throughout the West in the next month, so any storms that do come will likely have high snow levels. And areas north of Sacramento are expected to be drier than normal.

Celebrating 75 Years Conserving the Idaho Way

## LOW INTEREST LOANS FOR IDAHO SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION

Sprinkler Irrigation, No-Till Drills, Fences  
Livestock Feeding Operations  
Solar Stock Water Pump Systems

**2.5%-3.5% Terms 7-15 Years Up to \$200,000**

**IDAHO CONSERVATION LOAN PROGRAM**

swc.idaho.gov | 208-332-1790

## Lawsuit claims malfunction killed chickens

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

An Oregon egg producer is seeking \$500,000 in damages from a Washington company it accuses of improperly installing equipment that led to the deaths of 100,000 chickens.

Willamette Egg Farms, based in Canby, Ore., has filed a lawsuit claiming that an electrical malfunction halted ventilation at its facility in Moses Lake, Wash., asphyxiating 100,000 hens.

The complaint alleges that Spectrum Communications of Moses Lake is liable for negligence and breach of contract because it installed a control system that failed to set off an alarm when the ventilation system stopped operating.

Capital Press was unable to reach the owner of Spectrum Communications for comment as of press time.

U.S. District Judge Thomas Rice in Spokane, Wash., is presiding over the

lawsuit, which was filed in the Eastern District of Washington.

**IMMEDIATE GROWER OPPORTUNITY**

**Kerr Concentrates is currently seeking red beet growers in the Willamette Valley for harvest the summer of 2015.**

Contact Rory Hayden  
at 503-587-8327 for more information.

ROP-10-3-2/#7

**WELLS FARGO ADVISORS**

## Step-Up CD 3.00%

Annual Percentage Yield\*

Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. Due 03/19/2035. Priced at 100. Callable starting 03/18/2018 at 100. Coupon Steps: 3.00% until 03/18/2022, 3.50% until 03/18/2027, 4.00% until 03/18/2031, 5.00% until 03/18/2033, 6.00% until 03/18/2034, 8.00% until maturity.

\*The Annual Percentage Yield (APY) represents the interest named through each eligible call date based on simple interest calculations, an investment price of 100 and is accurate as of 02/27/2015. Issued in denominations of \$1,000. As with any other investment, bonds sold prior to maturity are subject to market risk and may be worth more or less than original investment and will be subject to federal and possibly state taxes. As a trade-off for the competitive yields offered by CD step-ups, investors must be able to accept the risk of their CD being called prior to maturity. This means the investor may have to reinvest principal at a lower interest rate. Investors should purchase callable CD step-ups only if they are prepared to hold the CDs until they mature or are called. Additionally, liquidity in the secondary market can be limited. CDs are FDIC insured up to \$250,000 per depositor per insured depository institution for each account ownership category. This is considered a long-term fixed income product. A rise in interest rates will cause the value of these investments to decrease. You should consider the risks of owning these investments and the effect on your overall portfolio and asset allocation strategy.

**Byron Ellis**  
Senior Vice President, Investment Officer  
101 S. Capitol Blvd., Boise, ID 83702  
208-338-1200 • 800-992-9318  
Byron.Ellis@wellsfargoadvisors.com

Investment and Insurance Products: ► NOT FDIC Insured ► NO Bank Guarantee ► MAY Lose Value

Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC, Member SIPC, is a registered broker-dealer and a separate non-bank affiliate of Wells Fargo & Company. ©2014 Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC, 1014-04617

10-2/#17