

People & Places

Forester no stranger to controversy

Norm Johnson plays key role in forestry debate

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Forester Norm Johnson was enticed by “a career that lets me wander around the woods,” but his time is often spent in the thicket of controversy.

During his three decades as a forestry professor at Oregon State University, Johnson has shaped key federal forest policies while drawing fire from environmentalists and the timber industry.

“He’s had a real imprint on forest management out here,” said Josh Laughlin, executive director of the Cascadia Wildlands environmental group.

His role in forming the Northwest Forest Plan, which established a conservation and harvest regime for federal lands in 1994, is often cited as a signature achievement.

Making an impact in such a contentious field is impossible without ruffling a few feathers, so Johnson is by now accustomed to criticism.

He nonetheless seems taken aback by the recent rancor surrounding his advocacy for increasing “early seral” conditions in federal forests.

“Boy, have I caught hell over this,” he said.

The proposition is currently facing an onslaught of opposition from environmentalists who claim that it marks a return to clear-cutting mature stands. The forest products industry also isn’t enthusiastic about the idea, as it delays the production of harvestable timber.

Despite the tough reception, Johnson makes no apologies for the concept.

“Am I sorry we’re doing this? No. Will we keep going? Yes,” he said.

When moist forests in the Northwest were still untouched by the descendants of European settlers, it was natural for wildfires to create openings in the canopy, he said.

Before being reclaimed by trees, these sunny clearings



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Oregon State University forestry professor Norm Johnson, who was instrumental in shaping the Northwest Forest Plan, has long courted controversy over his strategies for timber harvest on federal lands in the West.

Western Innovator Norm Johnson

Occupation: Forestry professor at Oregon State University

Hometown: Corvallis, Ore.

Education: Bachelor of science in forestry from the University of California-Berkeley in 1965, Ph.D. in forest management and economics from Oregon State University in 1973

Age: 72

Family: Wife, Debbie, and four grown children



were initially populated by shrubs and other plants that produce flowers, fruits and seeds for wildlife to eat.

“It’s a tremendous food source for an amazing variety of creatures,” Johnson said. “It’s really in a lot of ways the most biologically diverse stage in a forest.”

At this point, though, such early seral habitat is actually scarcer than old growth in federal forests, which are dominated by fairly uniform stands of evenly aged trees, he said.

Managers with the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are currently focused on thinning projects to achieve a more complex structure associated with “late successional” forests.

Inevitably, though, federal forests will run out of areas suitable for commercial thinning,

putting the USFS and BLM on a trajectory of further declines in timber volume, Johnson said.

In the minds of Johnson and his research collaborator, University of Oregon ecology professor Jerry Franklin, the solution to these problems is to emulate natural disturbances.

Their recommendation to federal forest managers is for a “variable retention harvest” in which patches of forest are logged and left treeless for years, generating timber while clearing the way for early seral habitat.

“That’s the part that really got us into hot water,” Johnson said. “We’ve made everyone mad.”

Allowing parcels to be over-come with shrubs is considered a “regeneration failure” by industry-oriented foresters, while some environmentalists think

the strategy shows Johnson has “gone over to the dark side,” he said.

The blowback from environmentalists suggests that Johnson and Franklin have tried to deal with a “social science element” that they’re not well-equipped to handle, said Scott Homgren, an attorney with the American Forest Resource Council timber industry group.

Only a small portion of federal lands can be logged, so the decision to turn such areas into “brush fields” is questionable, he said. “You ought to be managing that for timber production.”

From the environmental perspective, the timing of the early seral strategy is dubious in light of the pressure on federal lands to produce timber revenues in rural areas.

“It gained a lot of prominence as western Oregon counties’ financial security was more and more unknown,” said Laughlin of Cascadia Wildlands.

There is a shortage of complex early seral habitat, but it would be better restored by allowing some forest fires to burn and avoiding salvage logging, said Andy Kerr, former executive director of the Oregon Wild environmental group.

In Kerr’s view, Johnson’s strategy is overly influenced by economic considerations. “It’s driven more by getting

logs out than by what the forest needs,” he said.

Though they have disparate views of his work, timber and environmental groups can agree on one thing: Johnson has played a pivotal position in the longstanding debate over federal forests.

“He’s got the ear of some important people,” said Homgren.

When Johnson was studying forestry in the 1960s, critical environmental laws hadn’t yet been passed and conflicts over forest management were still bubbling below the surface.

By the time he signed on as a forestry professor in 1985, the issue was coming to the forefront.

“I realized Oregon was in the middle of a major shift in how federal forests are managed, and I wanted to be a part of it,” he said.

Johnson developed a computer model called 4-Plan that the Forest Service adopted to calculate sustainable harvest levels in national forests.

The formula was based on the volume of growing timber needed to replace stands that were cut, but over time it became apparent that other considerations — such as rare species and water quality — were gaining in political importance.

Johnson and several other scientists were recruited by members of Congress to study these issues, which eventually led to his participation in a group that designed the Northwest Forest Plan.

Lawmakers and federal managers have since continued to depend on his expertise when crafting timber projects such as the White Castle project near Myrtle Creek, Ore., which is considered a test case for the early seral strategy. Environmental groups filed a lawsuit against the project and a federal judge recently agreed it was approved unlawfully.

Johnson continues to stir up controversy, but the overall thrust of his ideas has nonetheless moved forestry forward, said Kerr. “The forests are better off because of Norm Johnson’s decades of work.”

Kevin Bacon and eggs; actor stars in industry campaign

By CANDICE CHOI
The Associated Press

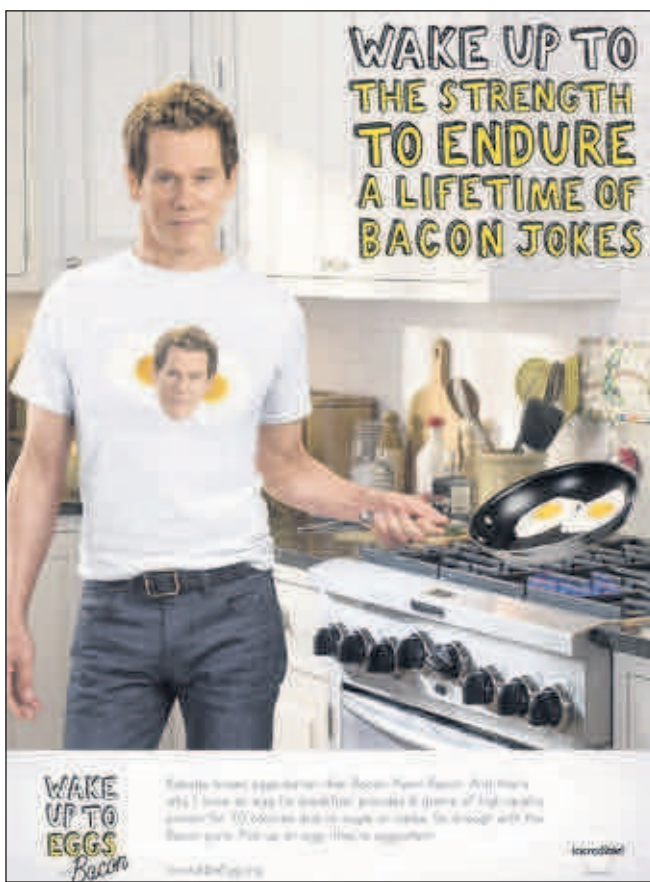
NEW YORK — The egg industry is ordering up a side of Kevin Bacon.

The American Egg Board says it plans to launch a print and online ad campaign this week featuring the “Footloose” actor and puns using his last name. The group says it’s the first time it’s using a Hollywood celebrity in a major marketing push.

The campaign comes at a promising time for the egg industry, with the nation’s protein craze helping fuel sales after decades of eggs being viewed as cholesterol bombs.

The online spots feature a woman making scrambled eggs for breakfast, when Bacon appears lying suggestively on the counter behind her. At one point, she leans in to sniff the actor and says she loves the smell of bacon, when her husband walks in. The “Wake Up To Eggs With Bacon” push by the ad agency Grey is an update on the “Wake Up To Eggs” campaign that launched in 2012.

Bob Krouse, CEO of Midwest Poultry Services, an egg



AP Photo/American Egg Board

This image provided by the American Egg Board shows a print ad featuring actor Kevin Bacon. The American Egg Board is launching a series of online ads featuring the “Footloose” actor and plenty of puns on his last name.

producer in Mentone, Indiana, said he’s glad the egg board is

taking a slightly edgier approach in its marketing.

“I always felt like egg farmers were too conservative,” Krouse said.

Already, the egg industry says it’s seeing a recent uptick in consumption. Last year, Americans on average consumed 259.8 a year, according to a recent report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That’s up from 249.3 in 2010, but still a long way from the levels before the 1970s, when people were consuming an average of more than 300 a year.

People cut back amid warnings about the cholesterol in egg yolks. In 1976, egg producers got worried about falling consumption and formed the American Egg Board to promote eggs and fund research showing their nutritional benefits. More recently, the group says the industry is benefiting from the demand for protein, especially in the mornings when people are shifting away from carb-filled options like cereal.

Then last month, a government advisory panel helping shape new dietary guidelines said the available evidence shows no significant relationship between heart disease

and dietary cholesterol. So it said overconsumption of cholesterol is no longer a concern.

“We think we’re in the beginning stages of the most positive, long-term growth period for eggs in decades,” said Kevin Burkum, senior vice president of marketing at the American Egg Board.

Still, the egg industry — in which about 175 companies account for 99 percent of the laying hens — is also dealing with new regulations and scrutiny over animal welfare.

A law that went into effect in California this year requires egg producers to give chickens enough room to stand up and spread their wings. Paul Shapiro, vice president for farm animal protection at the Human Society of the United States, said the law was interpreted by many at the time of its passage to mean chickens should be cage-free, but that some egg producers have since disputed that position.

Although the egg industry has been moving toward cage-free chickens, Shapiro said the vast majority of eggs in the U.S. still come from chickens kept in cages.

Capital Press

Established 1928

Board of directors

Mike Forrester President
Steve Forrester
Kathryn Brown
Sid Freeman Outside director
Mike Omeg Outside director

Corporate officer

John Perry
Chief operating officer

Capital Press Managers

Mike O’Brien Publisher
Joe Beach Editor
Elizabeth Yutzie Sell Advertising Director
Carl Sampson Managing Editor
Barbara Nipp Production Manager
Samantha McLaren Circulation Manager

Entire contents copyright © 2015
EO Media Group
dba Capital Press

An independent newspaper
published every Friday.

Capital Press (ISSN 0740-3704) is published weekly by EO Media Group, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem OR 97301.

Periodicals postage paid at Portland, OR, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to Capital Press, P.O. Box 2048 Salem, OR 97308-2048.

To Reach Us

Toll free 800-882-6789
Main line 503-364-4431
Fax 503-370-4383
Advertising Fax 503-364-2692

News Staff

N. California
Tim Hearden 530-605-3072

E Idaho

John O’Connell 208-421-4347

Idaho

Carol Ryan Dumas 208-860-3898

Boise

Sean Ellis 208-914-8264

Central Washington

Dan Wheat 509-699-9099

E Washington

Matthew Weaver 509-688-9923

Oregon

Eric Mortenson 503-412-8846

Mateusz Perkowski 800-882-6789

Graphic artist

Alan Kenaga 800-882-6789

To Place Classified Ads

Ad fax 503-364-2692
or 503-370-4383
Telephone (toll free) 866-435-2965
Online www.capitalpress.com/classifieds

Subscriptions

Mail rates paid in advance
Easy Pay U.S. \$3.75/month (direct withdrawal from bank or credit card account)
1 year U.S. \$49.49
2 years U.S. \$89.89
1 year Canada \$275
1 year other countries call for quote
1 year Internet only \$49
1 year 4-H, FFA students and teachers ... \$30
9 months 4-H, FFA students & teachers \$25
Visa and Mastercard accepted

To get information published

Mailing address:
Capital Press
P.O. Box 2048
Salem, OR 97308-2048

News: Contact the main office or news staff member closest to you, send the information to newsroom@capitalpress.com or mail it to “Newsroom,” c/o Capital Press. Include a contact telephone number.

Letters to the Editor: Send your comments on agriculture-related public issues to opinions@capitalpress.com, or mail your letter to “Opinion,” c/o Capital Press. Letters should be limited to 300 words. Deadline: Noon Monday.

Capital Press ag media

www.capitalpress.com
www.FarmSeller.com
www.AgDirectoryWest.com
www.OnlyAg.com
www.facebook.com/capitalpress
www.facebook.com/farmseller
www.facebook.com/onlyAGdotcom
twitter.com/capitalpress
www.youtube.com/capitalpressvideo
www.blogiculture.com

Index

California 9
Dairy 14
Idaho 8
Livestock 15
Markets 16
Opinion 6
Oregon 10
Washington 11

Correction policy

Accuracy is important to Capital Press staff and to our readers.

If you see a misstatement, omission or factual error in a headline, story or photo caption, please call the Capital Press news department at 503-364-4431, or send email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

We want to publish corrections to set the record straight.

Calendar

MARCH

OREGON

March 20-23 — Oregon FFA State Convention, Silverton, www.oregonffa.com

March 20-22 — Northwest Horse Fair & Expo, Linn County Fair and Expo Center, Albany, www.equinepromotions.net

IDAHO

March 27 — Forestland grazing workshop, 1 to 5 p.m., Federal Building meeting room, Seventh Avenue and College Street, St. Maries, 208-245-2422, http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry

CALIFORNIA

March 22-24 — California Fresh Fruit Association Annual Meeting, The Grand

Del Mar, San Diego, www.CAFreshFruit.com

APRIL

OREGON

April 18 — Oregon Women for Agriculture Auction and Dinner, Linn County Fair and Expo Center, Albany, 503-243-FARM (3276), http://owaonline.org/

April 25-26 — AgFest, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, Oregon State Fairgrounds, Salem, \$9 for adults, under 12 are free, http://www.oragfest.com

CALIFORNIA

April 18-21 — California State FFA Conference, Selland Arena, Fresno, www.calaged.org/stateconvention

IDAHO

April 8-11 — State FFA Leadership Conference, College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls, www.idffaoundation.org/

April 24 — Forester map and compass workshop, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., University of Idaho Extension office, 1808 N. Third St., Coeur d’Alene, \$10 fee, 208-446-1683, http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry/content/calendarofevents

WASHINGTON

April 4 — Washington State Sheep Producers Lambing and Management School, Sprague, \$50 (member), \$60 (non-member),

509-257-2230, dvm@feustelfarms.com

April 6-11 — Washington State Sheep Producers Shearing School, Moses Lake

April 16-19 — Washington State Spring Fair, Puyallup, 2-10 p.m. Thursday, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Sunday, http://www.thefair.com/spring-fair/

MAY

WASHINGTON

May 14-16 — Washington FFA Convention, Washington State University, Pullman, www.washingtonffa.org/convention

CALIFORNIA

May 1-2 — Forest Landowners of California annual meeting, Holiday Inn, Auburn, www.forestlandowners.org/

JUNE

CALIFORNIA

June 15-26 — Postharvest Technology Short Course, University of California-Davis, http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/Education/PTShortCourse/

JULY

IDAHO

July 11 — 94th Annual Idaho Ram Sale, Twin Falls County Fairgrounds, Filer, 208-334-2271 or iwga@earthlink.net