

Subscribe to our weekly Idaho email newsletter at [CapitalPress.com/newsletters](http://CapitalPress.com/newsletters)

## Idaho

# Idaho grain, cattle producers agree on 'open range' plan

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho's cattle and grain associations have developed a plan they hope will allow their members to settle open range disputes internally rather than in the courts or legislature.

The Idaho Grain Producers Association and Idaho Cattle Association recently agreed on a system that will use regional directors from both groups to help solve open range issues between cattlemen and grain farmers.

IGPA Executive Director Travis Jones said the plan involves a "peer-to-peer state-

wide network system."

"We think the best resolutions to these issues are solved in the countryside and not in the Capitol," he said.

In open range areas in Idaho, cattle are permitted to roam freely. It's the responsibility of landowners to fence their property to keep cattle out.

The opposite is true in areas with herd districts, which can be created by county commissioners or through a petition by landowners.

Most of Idaho is open range.

The plan, which took a year to develop and will soon be explained to grain producers and cattlemen, involves

regional directors from both groups appointed to deal with open range disagreements in their areas.

These directors will be heavily involved in their respective organizations and trusted by their peers in the region, said John Foster, an IGPA lobbyist who helped broker the deal.

Foster said there is usually a fairly obvious solution to the problem that can be agreed to when well-respected peers without a vested interest are allowed to intervene.

There are about 2.2 million beef cattle in Idaho and 1.8 millions acres of wheat and barley.

While some cattlemen and grain producers have clashed because of open range issues over the years, those disputes haven't become a major problem and the two groups want to keep it that way, Jones said.

"We felt it's better we tackle these things internally and maybe we can take what's a micro problem and make it into a macro solution, essentially," he said. "We want to find a solution that doesn't involve legislators or policemen and district courts."

ICA Executive Vice President Wyatt Prescott said the groups came up with the

solution "to try to solve this amongst ourselves rather than on a legislative level."

Prescott said one simple solution could include a grain farmer supplying fencing material and a cattle producer agreeing to provide the labor to install it.

Or, he said, it could involve moving a grazing rotation to "earlier in the spring and getting those cattle a pasture or two away from that border later in the season when there might be more opportunity for conflict."

"We're looking for those kinds of simple, common-sense solutions," Prescott said.



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Ric Sorbo, project manager of the proposed Magnida fertilizer plant in Idaho's Power County, speaks during a community meeting on the plant last summer.

## Fertilizer plant project still on track

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

AMERICAN FALLS, Idaho — Officials planning a large nitrogen fertilizer plant here say they remain on track to break ground this summer, and they expect to save nearly half a billion dollars in construction costs thanks to lower oil prices.

Ric Sorbo, project manager of Texas-based Magnida, increased his original cost estimate for plant construction from \$2.1 billion to \$3 billion when competition with the booming domestic energy sector drove up construction bids.

But with lower oil prices, construction in U.S. oilfields has slowed and Sorbo estimates the broader pool of contractors hungry for work should reduce his project cost to "somewhere north of \$2.5 billion."

The plant, to be built on farm land near ConAgra's factory, would use natural gas as a feedstock and produce more than a million combined tons per year of ammonia, urea, UAN — a solution of urea and ammonium nitrate — and diesel exhaust fluid.

Sorbo plans to enter into a seven- to 10-year contract for natural gas. At current prices, he estimates he would save \$20 million per year on natural gas compared with prices anticipated in his original modeling.

Sorbo said he's delayed the original timeline for the financial close — when all details are solidified and the project can go forward — to take advantage of declining oil and gas prices. He now anticipates financial close in the early summer.

"The reason it's been pushed back a little bit, quite frankly, is we're taking advantage of the downturn in oil prices we've seen in the last three or four months. That makes the construction companies hungrier," Sorbo said. "And look at natural gas prices. In the last six months they've come down dramatically."

Within the next two months, Sorbo said Magnida expects to select its engineering and construction company. Magnida has received competing offers from two large firms — Bechtel and KBR. He said Magnida is also continuing its conversations with banks and investors to line up financing.

A roadblock facing the project was overcome recently when ConAgra Foods reached an agreement with Magnida and rescinded an appeal of the clean air permit issued for the fertilizer plant. Details of the agreement have been kept confidential.

Magnida's goal is to open the plant, which would employ 175 workers, by 2017.

University of Idaho Extension economist Paul Patterson said the plant may not lower nitrogen fertilizer costs but would likely displace fertilizer imports from foreign markets and stabilize prices. Reduced price volatility would facilitate budgeting for producers, he said.

Patterson said nitrogen prices appear to be comparable to last year's levels.

"The theme of the market seems to be there's going to be an abundance of natural gas available, which should keep prices relatively stable," Patterson said, adding that lower commodity prices should also reduce fertilizer demand.

## Idaho lawmakers OK \$200,000 for sheep station

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho lawmakers are showing their support for the USDA's sheep experiment station near Dubois with \$200,000 in ongoing state funding.

That money will be provided to the University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and will be used to support two range research positions at the station.

CALS didn't ask for the money in its fiscal year 2016 budget request but members of the Idaho Legislature's Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee who support the station were successful in getting it put into CALS' research and extension budget.

The 20-member JFAC, which includes legislators from the Senate and House and sets funding levels, voted unanimously to appropriate the money.

USDA has targeted the station for closure and a diverse group of supporters and stakeholders has been fighting to keep it open.

In a letter to Congress, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack said a lack of financial and human resources at the



Photo submitted

Sheep graze at the USDA Agricultural Research Service Sheep Experiment Station in Dubois, Idaho. The Idaho Legislature has approved \$200,000 in funding.

station is one of the reasons it is slated for closure.

Vilsack said that "reduced funding levels and staffing levels ... and increasing costs have contributed to the unsustainability of the ongoing research program at the (station)."

Sen. Steve Bair, R-Blackfoot, a JFAC member, helped lead the effort to get the

\$200,000 into CALS' budget. Bair, a retired farmer, said the funding shows the USDA that Idaho is committed to helping keep the station open.

"It tells them the state of Idaho thinks it's important and is willing to put some skin in the game on this thing," said Idaho Wool Growers Association Executive Director Stan Boyd.

Boyd said the research station encompasses more than 48,000 acres in Idaho and Montana and covers three climate zones and numerous landscapes.

"It's a perfect place to conduct research for the sheep industry," he said. "It's a real asset and it would be a real shame to lose that station."

If the station remains open, the range research positions will work out of Dubois. If it's closed, those positions will move to Salmon, said Rich Garber, director of industry and government relations for CALS.

The funding serves two purposes, one of which is "to make a statement that the state of Idaho has some skin in the game and that they see the value of that research center in Dubois," he said. "The second thing is that it is an investment in further research on range issues."

The \$200,000 in state funding was applauded by the Idaho Cattle Association, which told its members in its regular newsletter that the station is crucial for Idaho's cattle industry because it hosts "a century of data on grazing and sage grouse, something that has not yet been fully mined nor could ever be duplicated."

### Indoor protection, outdoors. With B-Wrap.

"All bales have been stored under B-Wrap for 2 years and remain in top condition. The addition of the new, 6000 ft. B-Wrap has allowed us to store our hay in a much more secure and protected environment. We are very satisfied with the results." — Tom Winters, Farm Manager, Harts-Winters

### Hay's biggest enemy is moisture.

But what if you could store bales outside, and still get the same protection as if they were inside? Now you can.

B-Wrap from John Deere cuts storage loss down to almost nothing by:

- Stopping water, rain and snow
- Allowing winter wind to escape, preventing compression and mold formation
- Allowing summer heat to escape, preventing mold

With B-Wrap, the great outdoors is your high-capacity storage facility. Talk to your John Deere dealer about B-Wrap today.

Now compatible with both premium and standard baling!

B-Wrap gives you:

- 1 UV protection
- 2 Water & snow resistance
- 3 Micro-pores that let water vapor escape
- 4 Insulation from ground moisture

[www.deere.com/B-Wrap](http://www.deere.com/B-Wrap)

### John Deere Dealers

See one of these dealers for a demonstration

**Belcorp Ag, LLC**  
Modesto, CA

**Campbell Tractor & Implement**

Fruitland, ID  
Homedale, ID  
Nampa, ID  
Wendell, ID

**Evergreen Implement Inc.**

Coulee City, WA  
Moses Lake, WA  
Othello, WA  
Ritzville, WA

**Kern Machinery Inc.**

Bakersfield, CA  
Buttonwillow, CA  
Delano, CA

**Papé Machinery**

Bonnars Ferry, ID  
Four Lakes, WA  
Madras, OR  
Merrill, OR  
Moscow, ID  
Ponderay, ID  
Tangent, OR  
Tekoa, WA  
Walla Walla, WA

**Washington Tractor, Incorporated**

Chehalis, WA  
Ellensburg, WA  
Lynden, WA  
Quincy, WA

**JOHN DEERE**