

OSU moving toward hiring hazelnut Extension specialist

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

In a move to catch up with the state's fast-moving hazelnut industry, Oregon State University is in the process of hiring an orchard management specialist.

A committee will review applicants for the job on Friday and choose finalists for interviews in May.

Michael Bondi, director of OSU's North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora, said the person hired will devote about 80 percent of his or her time to hazelnuts, a \$120 million annual crop. Oregon produces nearly all of U.S. hazelnuts, and growers have been adding 3,000 to 5,000 acres a year. The state went from 29,000 acres of hazelnuts in 2009 to an estimated 47,000 acres by the end of 2014.

"It's definitely in a significant growth mode," Bondi said. "There's a huge number of new acres. We



Oregon grower Tim Aman pulls a harvester along a windrow of valuable hazelnuts in this photo from October 2014. Oregon State University is hiring a hazelnut extension specialist to work with growers.

see steady growth for the next several years."

But Oregon hasn't had a statewide hazelnut specialist since Yamhill County Extension's Jeff Olsen died unexpectedly in January 2014.

Michael Klein, executive director of the Hazelnut Marketing Board, said the industry needs someone who can carry the work of OSU researchers to growers in the field. "It's something our industry feels is

critically needed," Klein said. "We could really use the help."

Turkey is by far the world's largest hazelnut growing region, but has been hit hard by weather problems in recent years.



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Freshly harvested hazelnuts fill a bin at Aman Farms in this October 2014 file photo. Oregon produces 99 percent of U.S. hazelnuts and growers are adding 3,000 to 5,000 acres per year.

Oregon growers received record prices this past year due to a freeze that wrecked much of the Turkish production.

Bondi, the North Willamette director, said the Extension position will focus on production, including the establishment of new orchards and pest management and nutrition problems. Hazelnut genetics work is covered by OSU breeder Shawn Mehlen-

bacher on campus is Corvallis, Bondi said, but the North Willamette specialist will carry out basic field research and demonstrations in collaboration with growers.

The job pays \$70,000 to \$80,000 annually, Bondi said.

The new person will work out of the North Willamette center just east of Interstate 5 near Aurora.



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Water flows over Lake Easton Dam into the start of the Yakima River near Easton, Wash., on April 16. Water was just starting into the main canal of the Kittitas Reclamation District.

Water shortage cuts short Washington hay production

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

ELLENSBURG, Wash. — Most Timothy growers in the Kittitas Valley will get only one cutting this summer because of the drought.

It's a loss of profit for growers but should tighten the oversupply of Timothy for export, said Mike Hajny, vice president of Wesco International Inc., a hay exporter in Ellensburg.

"For the grower, it's money out of their pocket, so they're not happy. First-cutting is cash that covers bills and gives income. Second-cutting is bonus, so they can make it financially without second," Hajny said.

First-cutting Timothy is where the money is because export markets prefer it, he said.

Last year, there was enough good first-cutting Timothy that exporters weren't able to sell second-cutting, he said. Then a longshoremen work slowdown at West Coast ports created a backlog of hay inventory.

Ports are getting back to normal but are still congested, Hajny said. Wesco is exporting 14 to 15 containers of hay per day versus six a couple of months ago and 30 before the slowdown, he said.

Drought, caused by lack of winter snow in the mountains, has led to the Kittitas Reclamation District starting water deliveries April 20 at 1.25 cubic feet per second per acre per 24

hours instead of a normal 2.25 cfs. KRD is the largest irrigation district in the valley, serving 60,000 acres. Two smaller districts have senior rights and should get all their water.

"We can't shut down for a month and then start up again, like the Roza district can (in the Yakima Valley)," said Ken Hasbrouch, KRD manager.

The focus, he said, is to try to supply as much water as possible until first-cutting in mid-June and then reduce deliveries, forgoing second-cutting and stretching what water is left for pastures, cattle and tree fruit.

"We hope we have

enough for them," Hasbrouch said.

"It is what it is. Each month plays into the situation. We're preparing for the worst and hoping for the best," said Mark Charlton, a Timothy grower near the town of Kittitas. He said his challenge may be finding water for his cattle.

A lot of Timothy and some alfalfa is grown in the valley. Three cuttings of alfalfa is normal most years, but this year there will likely be just one, said Urban Eberhart, an Ellensburg grower and KRD board member.

The weather is dry, temperatures are increasing and fields are just getting their first water, he said.

"Ditch riders are working hard to make sure water is distributed correctly," he said. "There is higher stress than in a normal year. Everyone is doing the best they can with what they have."

There are emergency wells on the Roza and KRD but the state has yet to authorize their use, Eberhart said.

Washington hemp bill grows in scope, cost

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — The once-promising campaign to legalize hemp cultivation in Washington may be withering.

In one of the first bills passed this year, the Senate in February unanimously approved no-frills legislation declaring hemp an agricultural crop.

The House and hemp advocates, however, favored state oversight to ensure the cannabis crop doesn't get tainted by cross-pollinating with marijuana or run afoul of federal authorities, who categorize hemp as a controlled substance.

The Washington Department of Agriculture estimates providing that regulation would cost at least \$900,000 a year. WSDA could collect fees from hemp farmers, but the agency says it would still need \$400,000 to \$500,000 right away from general taxes to get the program started.

Neither House nor Senate budget writers, responsible for producing a balanced spending plan, have proposed allocating the money to make legalizing hemp possible this year.

Hemp legislation, Senate Bill 5012, has languished for the past month in the House Appropriations Committee. "That bill is probably not moving," WSDA policy assistant Steve Fuller said Tuesday.

Hemp lobbyist Joy Beckerman Maher said her optimism has turned to pessimism. "I'm no longer confident the hemp bill will pass this year," she said.

Beckerman Maher argued for a state role in protecting the

low-THC purity of hemp seeds and crops. Now, she says, the proposed oversight has become unnecessarily expensive, citing a provision that would require a WSDA employee to personally collect hemp seeds for testing.

Fuller said WSDA wants to protect the integrity of testing seeds, but is ready to follow any direction from lawmakers.

Sen. Brian Hatfield, D-Raymond, sponsored SB 5012, but a House committee rewrote it. The measure has little resemblance to the two-page bill Hatfield introduced.

Hatfield said Tuesday he still favors a light regulatory touch. "The simpler, the better. That hasn't changed," he said.

"The problem is that the more regulations, the more monitoring in place, the more expensive it is," he said. "Maybe in the special session we'll be able to have a discussion about what is and what isn't necessary."

Early in the session, legalizing hemp seemed like a natural step in a state with voter-approved recreational marijuana. Hemp supporters say the crop has many uses, including livestock bedding and feed, and invoke the memory of the nation's Founding Fathers, who cultivated hemp.

Lawmakers, however, are not obliged to legalize growing hemp and are unsure of the expense. WSDA says it can only make rough guesses at the cost of regulating hemp. The U.S. does not yet have a commercial hemp crop, so it's too soon to look at what has happened in the eight states that have legalized hemp farming.

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