

# Beef packers apply for DEQ permit to build plant

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

J.R. Simplot Co. and Texas-based Caviness Beef Packers are seeking an air quality permit to construct a \$100 million beef processing plant near Kuna, Idaho, from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.

The joint venture, under the name of CS Beef Packers,

was announced in January. The proposed permit would regulate emissions from the beef packing and rendering facility, according to DEQ.

Pending permit approval, construction of a 300,000-square-foot plant on Cole Road at the corner of Barker Road seven miles from Kuna is expected to begin soon. Processing is expected to begin in the third quarter of 2016, ac-

ording to the application.

The proposed facility will be capable of processing 1,700 head of cattle a day with an expected operating schedule of five to six days per week. It will produce a range of products including meat and bone meal, dried blood meal, tallow and hides.

In announcing the proposed plant in January, Simplot stated the primary purpose of the plant

will be to harvest cull cows and bulls from Northwest dairies and Intermountain West cattle ranches. The operation will also include hide and rendering processing and have the ability to process niche fed beef.

The plant will reduce the need for dairy farmers and ranchers to ship cull cattle out of the area for processing while filling beef demand, which is at an all-time high, Simplot stated.

The plant is expected to create up to 600 new jobs.

The facility will use an anaerobic digester as part of its wastewater treatment system and use the methane gas byproduct to fuel two of the plant's four boilers, according to the application.

DEQ received the permit application on April 30 and posted notification to the public on Monday, stating a 30-

day public comment period will be provided if a written request is submitted to the agency by May 26.

Requests for a comment period can be submitted by mail or email to Tessa Stevens,

Air Quality Division, DEQ State Office, 1410 N. Hilton, Boise, ID 83706 or tessa.stevens@deq.idaho.gov

For more information: www.deq.idaho.gov

# Lawmaker bemoans 'farcical' defeat of farmworker bill

By TIM HEARDEN  
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — A state lawmaker bemoaned as "farcical" an Assembly panel's party-line defeat of his bill to give workers certain rights in cases when the state imposes contract mediation on a farm.

Assemblyman Jim Patterson, R-Fresno, said Democrats on the lower chamber's Labor and Employment committee left farmworkers like those at Gerawan Farming Inc. with no recourse against perceived overreaches by the state's Agricultural Labor Relations Board.

Patterson's bill — which came in response to a more than two-year labor dispute at the Fresno-based Gerawan — would have enabled workers to attend mediation sessions to gain an understanding of the terms of their contract and then vote on whether to ratify the contract.

Assembly Bill 1389 would have also required the ALRB to nullify a contract if the union abandons the workers for three or more years.

But a majority on the committee sided with the United Farm Workers, which argued the legislation would conflict with decades of California agricultural labor law and subject farmworkers to further intimidation from employers, according to an Assembly bill analysis.

"We really saw a farcical circus today, where farmworkers who were pleading for justice ... were basically patronized, patted on the head and sent out the back," Patterson told reporters after the panel's May 6 decision.

"These individuals here (on the committee) simply said to these very good people, 'Shut up and go away,'" he said. "That's unconscionable."

UFW officials did not respond to an email from the Capital Press seeking comment about the bill's defeat.

Gerawan and the UFW have been locked in a legal battle, as the fruit producer is challenging the constitutionality of the ALRB's move to force a labor contract on the company.

Many of the workers at Gerawan are trying to decertify the UFW, which won rep-



Courtesy of Assemblyman Jim Patterson

Farmworkers demonstrate at a rally at the California Capitol for a bill that would have given workers more of a voice in state labor proceedings. The bill was defeated in an Assembly committee.

resentation at the farm in 1990 but never negotiated a contract. The union reappeared in 2012 but failed to reach an agreement with the company, and the matter was put before a mediator.

Workers voted in November 2013 on whether to be represented by UFW, but the ballots were impounded pending a state investigation of irregularities that were alleged during the petition drive.

More than 100 witnesses testified at a hearing before a state administrative law judge which concluded in March, and a decision on the matter may be issued by late May or early June, according to Paul Bauer, an attorney for Silvia Lopez, one of the workers trying to oust the UFW.

Meanwhile, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals is considering a motion to dismiss Lopez's year-old federal lawsuit alleging the ALRB violated the civil rights of workers by refusing to count the ballots, Bauer said recently.

While Lopez and her allies say a vast majority of

Gerawan workers want to be rid of the UFW and the prospect of paying union dues, the farm's employees have been conspicuous on both sides of a public-relations battle that has gained national attention.

On May 5, some Gerawan workers were joined by other farmworkers and labor leaders at a UFW-sponsored protest at the Washington, D.C. headquarters of the Americans for Tax Reform, which was behind a series of billboard ads in the Fresno area in support of the anti-union effort.

The following day, Lopez and dozens of other workers held a rally at the state Capitol in support of AB 1389, the Fair Contracts for California Farmworkers Act, and then attending the committee hearing.

"If there's nobody out there to help us ... I don't know what's going to happen with all the farmworkers, thousands of farmworkers," Lopez said at the news conference, from which video footage was distributed by Patterson's office. "It makes me a little bit disappointed."

# Fruitland FFA chapter surprise recipient of raffled antique tractor

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

FRUITLAND, Idaho — Fruitland High School's FFA chapter is the surprise owner of a restored 1946 John Deere GM tractor that was raffled off to raise scholarship money for Idaho FFA students.

Instead of writing their own name on the back of the winning ticket, the person who purchased it wrote "Fruitland FFA chapter."

That's the first time that has happened during the tractor raffle's five-year history and Fruitland ag science teacher Mike Tesnohlidek didn't believe it at first when he received a text from a student telling him the school won the tractor.

"I was like, 'whatever,'" he said. "Two minutes later I got a text from (fellow ag science teacher Troy Wright) and I realized it was true."

Wright and Tesnohlidek said they considered selling the tractor but decided its sentimental value and practical uses would be more valuable to the school's agricultural sciences program.

"There are all kinds of things we can use it for," Wright said.

That includes raising awareness of the FFA program by showing it off during parades and community events, teaching non-farm students to drive it and educating students about basic tractor maintenance.

The tractor also has a sprayer

and can be used to teach students about the basics of spraying.

"It would be pretty good to go through it with the students and teach them about the components and what it takes to drive a tractor," Tesnohlidek said.

Twin Falls area farmer Ralph Breeding, who donated the tractor, said he was happy to hear it was put to good use.

"It's nice to know it's still in good hands," he said. "They can keep it for awhile, do whatever they want with it, and then sell raffle tickets for it again if they want."

The annual tractor raffle was started by Middleton farmer Sid Freeman and his wife, Pam, in 2011. Five tractors built in the 1940s and early 1950s have been raffled off since then and this year's tractor raised \$24,000.

That is enough to provide 14 \$1,000 scholarships and two \$2,000 scholarships for ag education majors. The rest of the money will go to support FFA programs.

The raffle has sold between 2,400 and 3,700 \$10 tickets each year but the goal has always been 5,000, which would be enough to provide 30 scholarships, Freeman said.

Based on a survey of ag education teachers last year that asked them how that 5,000 ticket goal might be achieved, Freeman decided to buy a new-



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Twin Falls area farmer Ralph Breeding stands in front of a 1946 John Deere GM tractor he donated for a raffle that raises scholarship money for Idaho FFA students. The winner of the tractor anonymously donated it to the Fruitland FFA chapter.

er model with more practicable uses.

Next year's tractor is an early 1980s model Massey Ferguson 275 with a loader and blade.

The ag education teachers "said, maybe if you used a little newer model, then you could sell more tickets," Freeman said. "We're going to see if that theory works."

The \$7,000 cost of the tractor and loader will be offset by business sponsorships the program has sold for each of the nine tractor banners used by FFA chapters during various events.

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