



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Fourth-graders from Jackson Street School in Yreka, Calif., pour water on a model of a city street to learn about water runoff. The exercise took place during the annual agricultural education day May 21 at the fairgrounds in Yreka.

Hands-on activities teach hydrology, math at ag ed day

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

YREKA, Calif. — A misty rain served as a perfect backdrop as ranchers Ryan and Jennifer Walker told groups of fourth-graders about the benefits of farmland in capturing runoff.

The couple had the children pour cups of water over models of a city street and a farm field to show them the difference in how quickly the water drained into a basin.

Farm fields, they said, capture and cleanse water from pollutants that would otherwise make it into drinking water, they said.

“It’s the same sort of thing that we’ve been talking to a lot of the agencies about,” Ryan Walker said in an interview. “We’re trying to point out the environmental benefits of having a lot of farmland.”

The hands-on project at the Walkers’ Siskiyou County Farm Bureau-sponsored booth was one of many that youngsters took part in during the 22nd annual agricultural awareness day May 21 at the fairgrounds in Yreka.

About 350 area fourth-graders attended the event, which is sponsored each year by the Siskiyou County CattleWomen and other local farm groups.

The hands-on activities are a hit each year with children and made a good impression on Renee McKay, a



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Tim Smith, center, of Fawaz Farming in Scott Valley, Calif., encourages fourth-graders to use math to figure out how much hay can be brought in from a field. His presentation was during the annual agricultural education day May 21 at the fairgrounds in Yreka, Calif.

fourth-grade teacher at Jackson Street Elementary School in Yreka.

“I think it’s great for (the students) to have hands-on education and see how things really are instead of just reading about them in a book,” McKay said.

This year, many of the booths focused on mathematics, reinforcing to students that the numbers problems they’re solving in class play a big role in running a farm. At one booth, students were handed a worksheet to try to calculate how many logs could be loaded onto a truck to keep it within a maximum weight of 26,000 pounds.

At another, Tim Smith of Fawaz Farming in Scott Valley, Calif., asked the students

if they could figure out how much hay could be hauled away by the Harobed truck he was demonstrating.

“It does over 600 bales an hour,” said Cohnton Richardson, a fourth-grader from Grenada, Calif.

Richardson said he learned from the Walkers’ runoff booth that “water can wipe out a lot of things.” He also tried his hand at roping a mock calf.

“I didn’t get a single one,” he said.

Parents said the ag day provides valuable lessons for kids about the area’s leading industry.

“I think it’s a great learning tool for the kids, especially in this community,” said Stephanie Richardson, Cohnton’s mom.

White House bee report resembles state findings

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

A new Obama administration strategy to strengthen honeybees resembles recommendations last year by a Washington state study group.

The White House report, like the state study, calls on government to take a leading role in creating pollinator-friendly landscapes.

Dayton beekeeper Paul Hosticka, who served on the state group, said he hoped the federal plan will prod state officials into action.

“Our state report, I hate to say, fell on deaf ears, legislatively,” he said.

The White House’s task force set a goal of reducing wintertime honeybee losses to 15 percent in 10 years. Current losses are estimated at around 30 percent.

The task force, co-chaired by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsak and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy, cited forage loss and parasitic Varroa mites as among the main reasons for beehive losses. The state report, released in December, came to the same conclusion.

The federal and state reports both reserved judgment on neonicotinoid pesticides. The European Union restricted neonicotinoids in 2013 for their purported ill effects on honeybees. The state group concluded the evidence was insufficient. The federal report proposes more research over the next three to five years by the EPA.

Washington State Beekeepers Association President Mark Emrich, a small-scale beekeeper in Thurston County, said he wished the White House had shown more urgen-



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Honeybees on display March 5 on the Capitol Campus in Olympia. A new White House report proposes increasing bee forage by 7 million acres within five years.

cy in determining whether neonicotinoids are harming bees.

“I hope to hell we can hang on that long,” he said.

Bee researcher Tim Lawrence, Washington State University’s Island County director, said Varroa mites and lack of bee forage are “by far the two biggest things.”

“Neonicotinoids are an unnecessary distraction, in my opinion,” said Lawrence, who also served on the state study group.

The White House proposes increasing federal spending to help pollinators, especially honeybees and monarch butterflies, from \$34 million this year to \$82 million next year.

Much of the money would be spent toward meeting the goal of restoring or enhancing 7 million acres for pollinators over the next five years. Half of the land would be federally owned, while the rest would be private lands or owned by state and local governments. Federal agencies would be instructed to plant bee forage on their property whenever possible.

Washington beekeepers lobbied state legislators this year to make state agencies more pollinator conscious.

They also wanted the State Noxious Weed Control Board to test planting pollen-rich plants where weeds had been eradicated. Many weeds targeted by the board nourish bees. Legislation failed as lawmakers from agricultural districts questioned whether the tests might inadvertently introduce new problem plants.

The Obama administration also proposes to expedite review of chemicals to control Varroa mites. The blood-sucking parasites appeared in 1987 and have bedeviled U.S. beekeepers ever since. The EPA recently approved using oxalic acid, an organic compound, to control the pests.

Ephrata commercial beekeeper Tim Hiatt said the industry has “limped along” with organic treatments, but has had to resort to harsher chemicals at times. “We’re using pretty much everything we can find,” he said.

Hiatt said he routinely loses one-third of his hives each winter. Losses were once 5 percent, he said.

Hiatt’s bees spend crucial summer months in North Dakota, making honey and girding themselves for the winter by feeding on ample forage.

In addition to the Varroa mite, chemicals in the environment may be robbing bees of their vitality, he said.

Hiatt called the goal of cutting hive losses in half “noble,” but said it will hard to attain. “I’d say it’s a great goal, and that’s all that it is,” he said.

Numerous federal agencies are crafting pollinator protection programs. The Washington State Department of Agriculture is working on a plan to promote bee health, but no details have been set, agency spokesman Hector Castro said.

Moisture needed for Washington wheat crop, grain commission says

Prices stay within 50-cent range due to large world supply

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

SPOKANE — Moisture will be critical for Washington’s wheat crop in the weeks leading up to harvest, say members of the Washington Grain Commission.

Commissioners spoke of varying crop conditions across the state’s wheat fields during their crop reports May 20 at the board meeting in Spokane. They painted a picture of a spring and winter wheat crop that’s showing signs of stress due to dry conditions.

An inch or so of rain the week of May 11 in the Tri-Cities and Eastern Oregon area was “a real game changer,” said industry representative Damon Filan, manager and merchandiser of Tri-Cities Grain in Pasco, Wash.

“Recent rains helped a lot, but we need to continue to see timely rains at the end of May and early June in order to salvage what yield potential there is,” said Ty Jessup, industry representative and marketing manager of Central Washington Grain Growers in Waterville, Wash.

Regions needed to replant spring wheat to replace winter wheat in varying degrees — some, “quite a bit,” he said, and others had good looking



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Washington Grain Commission industry representative Ty Jessup presents his market outlook May 20 during the commission board meeting in Spokane.

stands coming out of winter.

Soft white wheat traded on the Portland market at \$5.85 to \$6.20 per bushel for August and September delivery for ordinary protein, according to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. Soft white wheat with a guaranteed maximum of 10.5 percent protein traded at \$6.22 to \$6.53 per bushel. Most exporters are not issuing bids for nearby delivery, according to the service.

Prices will likely stick within a 50-cent range, Filan said, noting prices rallied 50 to 60 cents over the last week and a half.

“There seems to be plenty of wheat around the world,

the corn crop looks good and the soybeans are in,” he said. “The world will have ample amounts of grain unless there’s some type of disaster we don’t see right now.”

Filan recommended farmers keep selling during 30-cent and 40-cent price rallies, marketing 10 to 15 percent of their crop each time, especially if prices are break-even or above the cost of production.

The new crop is roughly 10 percent sold, down from recent years, when it would be as high as 30 to 35 percent sold at this time of year because prices were so good, Filan said.



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