

Idaho governor announces first-ever AgriTech summit

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Gov. Butch Otter has announced a first-ever AgriTech summit, where leaders of Idaho's agricultural and technology sectors will explore ways to work together to innovate and create jobs. The Governor's AgriTech Summit will take place June 16 from 1-4 p.m. at the Boise Center in downtown Boise. The event is the initial step in Idaho Department of Commerce Director Jeff Sayer's vision to make Idaho a Silicon

Valley of agricultural technology by bringing the two leading sectors of the state's economy together. Sayer said Idaho is already a leader in the ag tech marketplace but he believes the state has a chance to take that position to the next level. The venture capital market is starting to pour billions of dollars into agricultural technology and it's important for Idaho to position itself so it can capitalize on that investment, he said. "This summit is an opportunity for Idaho to initiate the

conversation around the state on how we can solidify a leadership position in the ag technology marketplace," he said. The summit will allow the state's technology sector to learn what agriculture's challenges are and for the technology sector to educate agriculture about its capabilities to solve those challenges, Otter said. "By bringing the two sides together, it's going to answer some questions the ag sector has never thought of and it's going to raise some questions the technology sector has nev-

er thought to ask the ag sector," Otter said. "I think it's a huge opportunity." Chanel Tewalt, assistant to the Idaho State Department of Agriculture director, said many summit attendees may not even know what the other side does or is capable of. "We want to start the conversation and get them talking to each other," said Tewalt, who is helping organize the event. "We want to see if there's an opportunity for the two sides to work together." ISDA Director Celia Gould will moderate a panel

discussion on agriculture that will address topics such as unmanned aerial systems, genetic engineering and on-farm production technology. A technology panel discussion will address data collection and analysis, mobile technology, sensors and storage technology. Donn Thill, associate dean of research for University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, will be part of a research panel discussion about bio-sciences, computer sciences and engineering.

"This is the first time I've ever been involved in this kind of endeavor and I'm pretty excited about it," he said. The cost to attend the summit is \$30 before June 9 and \$35 after that date, including on-site registration. People can register online at <https://www.accessidaho.org/ai/payport/online/ag/index.html>. For more information about the summit, contact Tewalt at chanel.tewalt@agri.idaho.gov or Kallen Hayes at kallen.hayes@commerce.idaho.gov.



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Treasure Valley Seed Co. employees inspect black turtle beans in Homedale, Idaho, in April. Dry bean industry representatives and researchers from Idaho, Colorado and Wyoming have agreed to work together on a regional bean research program.

Effort to create multi-state dry bean program picks up steam

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — People involved in an effort to create a multi-state bean research consortium say the idea is starting to come together quickly. "It's definitely going to happen," said Jerry Haynes, secretary of the Colorado Dry Bean Administrative Committee. The land-grant universities of Idaho, Colorado and Wyoming are in the final stages of signing a memorandum of understanding outlining their intentions to work jointly on projects that benefit all three states' dry bean industries, he said. A 15-member steering committee that includes dry bean industry members from multiple states has been meeting periodically since last year. It includes representatives of bean commissions, land grant universities and the bean processing industry. When Capital Press spoke with Haynes about the idea in December, he thought it was moving too slowly. But industry representatives and researchers from all three states agreed to work together during meetings in February

and April and Haynes is much more optimistic about the effort now. "It's happening quicker than I thought it would and it's stronger than I thought it would be," he said. Colorado has pledged \$10,000 a year for three years toward the effort, Idaho is expected to provide \$30,000 a year for three years and Wyoming, which recently created a bean commission and will start collecting assessments in July, will contribute as well, Haynes said. "We're looking at about \$50,000 a year in seed money and then we can start going after some grants," he said. Haynes said each state has something to offer the others. Colorado State University has a bean breeding program, something the University of Idaho and University of Wyoming lack, while UI and UW have plant pathologists and CSU will lose its plant pathologist at the end of June. Idaho has the largest bean industry of the three states and will be able to offer the most financial support. Haynes said other states are interested in the idea but haven't yet committed.

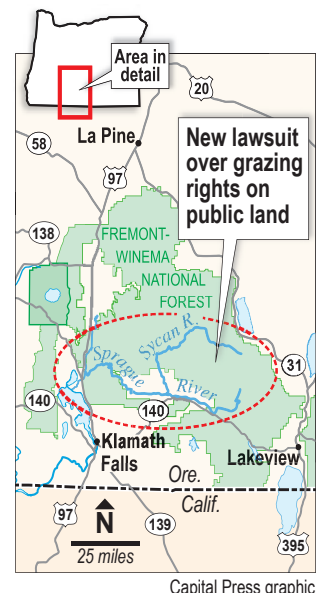
The benefit of a regional bean program is allowing the three states to pool their resources and avoid duplicating efforts, said Donn Thill, associate dean of research at UI's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Thill was involved in the effort that created a tri-state potato research consortium between Idaho, Oregon and Washington, and is advising the bean industry in its regional effort. "There's an opportunity for those states that grow beans but have limited research dollars to pool some of their funds and do something that will contribute positively to all three states without having to duplicate things," he said. "I think it's a great idea." The steering committee will meet again July 16-17 in Wyoming, said Idaho Bean Commission Administrator Andi Woolf, who said the effort can save grower dollars by ensuring the states don't duplicate research efforts. With university budgets getting tighter, "If we can each contribute a piece to that puzzle and work together, it's a lot better way to leverage our dollars," Woolf said.

Grazing battle flares up in Oregon

New lawsuit challenges cattle in Fremont-Winema National Forest

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

The legal battle over grazing on public lands has flared up in southern Oregon with a new lawsuit over the Fremont-Winema National Forest. Environmentalists are accusing the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of signing off on grazing in the forest despite "incomplete and inaccurate information" about harms to the Sprague and Sycan river basins. The plaintiffs — Oregon Wild, Friends of Living Oregon Waters and the Western Watersheds Project — claim cattle are trampling streambanks, widening channels and raising water temperatures to the detriment of fish. Negative impacts to the threatened bull trout have resulted in violations of the Endangered Species Act, while the degradation in water quality contravenes the Clean Water Act and National Forest Management Act, the lawsuit claims. Damage to the "scenic value" of the area also breaches the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, according to the plaintiffs.



Capital Press graphic

The complaint alleges repeated problems with overgrazing, poor fence conditions and unauthorized cattle in at least 10 grazing allotments are within the bull trout's "critical habitat." Some allotments also haven't been monitored for grass stubble height and other parameters of rangeland health, the complaint said. The Forest Service's own data shows that water temperatures in the streams exceeded Clean Water Act standards in "multiple years," but despite these issues the government concluded "livestock grazing was not likely to adversely affect newly designated bull trout critical habitat," the plaintiffs claim. The environmental groups

have asked a federal judge to declare the government's grazing authorizations to be unlawful and issue "temporary, preliminary or permanent injunctive relief" as necessary. The Forest Service had no comment and a representative of the Fish and Wildlife Service said the agency doesn't comment on pending litigation. Jerome Rosa, executive director of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, said he was disappointed that ranchers in the area will be subject to litigation at a time they're already contending with water shortages. The OCA will look into the situation and seek to assist ranchers in the area, said John O'Keefe, the group's president-elect. "We're definitely concerned," he said. The recent lawsuit comes after a couple years of relative calm in the controversy over grazing on public land in Oregon. In 2012, several consolidated complaints over grazing in the Malheur National Forest came to an end after the federal government established new conditions for ranchers to follow. In 2013, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals refused to block grazing in the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's half-million-acre "Louse Canyon" area while the agency re-evaluated grazing authorizations.

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