Washington

Potato leader lists priorities

By MATTHEW WEAVER Capital Press

The Washington State Potato Commission will concentrate on long-range planning this year, its new chairman

The commission recently named Mike Dodds as its new chairman. Dodds is raw material and environmental manager for Basic American Foods in Moses Lake, Wash. He previously chaired the commission's research committee. He succeeds Nelson Cox, a potato farmer from Warden, Wash.

Dodds said the commission will use this year to develop its long-range planning and review how well it adhered to the plan developed in 2010.

We'll get together with the growers of the state and hopefully come up with a prioritized list of things they'd like us to work on," he said.

The commission typically develops a long-range plan every five years, Dodds said.

Priorities include developing new markets, a constant need, he said. Domestic potato consumption is declining per capita, and growth opportunities seem to be in Asian mar-

"We need to capitalize on that," Dodds said.

The potato industry felt the effects of a labor dispute between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and West Coast port district container terminal operators, which included a labor slowdown in the fall of 2014, creating a backlog of potato and potato product shipments.

"It left nobody unscathed," Dodds said. "It impacted every facet of the potato industry, whether it was fresh, dehydrated or french fries. The concern is, we certainly don't want to have to go through this again in another four or five years. But without legislation, we could be up against me same ming

Dodds said advocating for growers' needs is the commission's job. He hopes to see potato farmers continue to participate and communicate with the public.

Disagreement strangles wolf bill

Lawmaker sees missed opporunity to change recovery plan

By DON JENKINS Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Okanogan County Rep. Joel Kretz battled against Washington's wolf policies all session, but ultimately was thwarted by his natural allies in the livestock industry and Legislature, who saw Kretz-sponsored legislation as gambling too much for too little gain.

As the 2015 session wound down, Kretz said Tuesday that he had the same worries. Nevertheless, he maintained that reopening the state's wolf plan was the only practical path toward change and worth the risk because the status quo is intolerable for ranchers.

"It comes down to, 'How's it working for you now, boys?""

Kretz, a Republican, shepherded a measure through the Democratic-controlled House to review the wolf plan. House Bill 2107 didn't dictate changes. but ordered wildlife managers to take into account that wolves



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington state Rep. Joel Kretz, R-Wauconda, talks June 30 in his office in Olympia about the Senate failing to pass his bill calling on the state Department of Fish and Wildlife to reconsider the state's wolf recovery plan.

are increasing in Kretz's district, northeast Washington's ranching country.

The bill died in the Republican-controlled Senate, where Sen. Brian Dansel, who represents the same district, opposed it, a position shared by the Stevens County Cattlemen's Association. "They're the ones who will be affected," Dansel said Tuesday. "It was a no-brainer for me to listen to my constit-

Stevens County rancher Ted Wishon said ranchers were concerned that environmental groups would seize the chance to amend the plan to their liking.

Among other things, HB 2107 instructed the Department of Fish and Wildlife to review the circumstances in which it will shoot wolves to stop livestock killings. Environmentalists and ranchers have fundamental differences on how lethal force has been used in the past.

"We really weren't ready for that fight," Wishon said. "Reopening that wolf plan wasn't really where I thought we needed to go."

The Washington Cattlemen's Association was firmly behind the bill. "I'm extremely disappointed," Executive Vice President Jack Field said. "Basically, we're set up for more of the status quo."

Early in the session, the Cattle Producers of Washington supported Kretz's bill. As the weeks went on, however, the group moved to a neutral position, spokeswoman Jamie Henneman said.

She said there was concern that HB 2107 would have assigned a large role to a mediator, Francine Madden, who persuaded WDFW to close to the public a meeting in May of the department's wolf advisory group. "There were a lot of mixed feelings on the board," Henneman said.

The House proposed spending \$850,000 to contract with Madden to lead wolf advisory group meetings. There's nothing in the final budget passed Monday by the Legislature. Kretz said Madden would have been a "huge boom" to resolving conflicts and helping the advisory group make recommendations to WDFW.

"I felt that was the most promising part of the whole deal," he said.

Dansel questioned the value of reopening the wolf plan. He said he thinks there's a chance the House and Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee can be persuaded next year to take wolves off the state's protected species list in Eastern Washington.

Researchers mull winter peas for dryland farmers

Crop rotation would reduce fertilizer, break up pest cycle

By MATTHEW WEAVER Capital Press

LIND, Wash. - Researchers are testing winter peas as a possible crop for dryland farmers in Eastern Washington.

Washington State University professor Stephen Guy and USDA Agricultural Research Service pea breeder Rebecca McGee spoke about their research during a field day at the university's dryland station in Lind, Wash., in June.

Guy said farmers are beginning to plant winter pea acres

in ary, famow areas. "We can plant them in the fall, they can make it through the winter with the right variety," he said. "We can actually get some return on them depending on what market

they're going into."

Winter pea market options are currently limited to cover crops, because most are feed quality. Food quality winter peas would open up readily available markets, Guy said.

Food quality peas are worth about twice the value of feed-quality peas to the farmer, McGee said.

Winter peas replace fertilizers, Guy said, and provide a crop rotation to a region that doesn't usually have a lot of crop diversity.

The greater the difference between the crops, the greater the influence of rotation," he said, citing nutrient cycling, breaking up disease and insect cycles and increased weed control options.

Guy said winter wheat yields increase about 20 percent following a pea crop.

Ritzville, Wash., farmer Rob Dewald experiences a yield bump when he follows winter peas with dark north-

ern spring wheat. The peas are a good broadleaf crop that allows him to take out grassy weeds like goatgrass, cheatgrass or rye economically, he

The toughest thing is winter survival, he said, noting he's lost two of the last three

'But we've got varieties that are coming that are real winter hardy," he said.

Peas tend to have shal-

low roots compared to cereal crops, so water stored in the soil would be accessible for a following wheat crop, Guy Winter pea problems in-

clude limited herbicide availability and the fact that it's a new crop for many people, Guy said. Guy said there will be more research at the dryland station next year.

McGee said she was initially skeptical about what would work at the Lind station, so she tested many varieties to see which would perform best. She is working to separate generations for different characteristics, including plant height, seed size and seed col-

McGee will send plants to New Zealand in order to increase populations, and plans to plant more plots in 2016 from the varieties that perform well at the Lind station.

Heat, herbicide-resistant barley on Spillman Field Day agenda

By MATTHEW WEAVER Capital Press

Washington State Universitv will showcase its grain and legume research at the upcoming Spillman Field Day.

Registration begins 7:30 a.m. July 14 at the Spillman Agronomy Farm in Pullman, Wash. WSU puts on the event every other year.

"This is one of the showcase events for research happening at the WSU research farm," said Ryan Higginbotham, director of WSU's cereal variety testing. "Growers only get a tour of it once every other year, so I would hope they would be interested in coming and checking it out."

The agenda includes updates on winter and spring wheat, barley and grain legume breeding programs. USDA Agricultural Research Service plant pathologist Xianming Chen will provide an update on stripe rust. WSU professor Kulvinder Gill will give a progress report on twogene Clearfield wheat varieties and heat tolerance.

"I think everyone will be concerned about the heat and drought," Higginbotham said. "We won't have the answers because we can't make it rain, but (farmers) will be able to see how different varieties are faring, and how they look compared to what they have on their own farm."

Researchers and farmers are finding heat-stressed plants **Online** http://smallgrainswsu.edu

at a variety of locations, Higginbotham said.

Higginbotham plans to provide yield information to farmers once the varieties are harvested.

Higginbotham believes growers will be interested in WSU barley breeder Kevin Murphy's work developing varieties with resistance to Beyond and other herbicides.

"They would not be labeled for spraying with the chemistry, but you could plant them in a rotation where you're using Beyond, whereas right now barley is not a good fit," he said. "(That) might help increase the barley acreage.'

Higginbotham expects 150 attendees, he said.

WSU small grains economist Randy Fortenbery will provide an economic update during lunch.





