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Idaho

Two new candidates for ag college dean announced

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

MOSCOW, Idaho — Two additional candidates are in the running to be the next dean of University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

An advisory committee conducting a nationwide search for a new CALS dean had narrowed the list to three candidates in April. But UI Provost John Wiencek announced June 25 the university had identified "additional well-qualified candidates...."

The two additional candidates are Jack Elliot, who

heads Texas A&M University's Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication, and Michael Parrella, who chairs University of California-Davis' Department of Entomology and Nematology.

They bring the list of finalists to five.

UI officials had initially told members of Idaho's farm industry they hoped to have the new dean in place by July 1, but state ag leaders said they aren't concerned with the search being continued.

"We're going with the flow," said Food Producers of Idaho President Travis Jones,

who is also executive director of Idaho Grain Producers Association. "We're willing to do our part to help the university get this important search wrapped up."

The 14-member committee, which began its search in January, had narrowed the pool of candidates from 25 to four people, who were interviewed in Moscow in May. One of those candidates later withdrew his name from consideration.

Idaho Dairymen's Association Executive Director Bob Naerebout, who is a member of the search committee, said he was "pleased with the

Online

More information about the University of Idaho agriculture dean candidates and the meeting dates and times can be viewed at www.uidaho.edu/provost/deanssearches/cals-dean-search/candidate-information

strong pool of candidates that have surfaced from the beginning of this process."

He said the committee's focus "is on making sure we have the right person in this position."

Ag leaders and other stakeholders will have a chance to

meet the two new candidates and ask them questions during open sessions in Room 62 of the Agricultural Science Building on UI's Moscow campus.

The meeting with Elliot will take place July 20 from 1-2 p.m. Pacific Time and the open forum with Parrella will occur July 21 from 2-3 p.m.

Those sessions will be recorded and posted online.

Select farm industry leaders will have an opportunity to meet with them in Boise.

Parrella has a bachelor's degree in animal science from Rutgers University and a Ph.D. in entomology from Virginia Tech University. According

to his bio, "his research is focused on developing integrated pest management programs for greenhouse and nursery crops, with an emphasis on biological control."

Elliot received a bachelor's degree in agricultural education and master's degree in ag economics from Washington State University. He earned his Ph.D. in ag education from Ohio State University.

According to his bio, he presides over 1,300 undergraduates, almost 200 graduate students and 80 faculty and staff at Texas A&M's ALEC, the largest university ag department in the nation.

New Idaho law protects info of farmers, ranchers in conservation agreements

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — A new Idaho law will protect the private information of farmers, ranchers and other landowners who enter into voluntary conservation agreements with soil conservation districts to protect sage grouse.

The law, which went into effect July 1, exempts the land management plans of these voluntary stewardship agreements from disclosure under Idaho's public records act.

House Bill 291 didn't garner much attention during the 2015 Idaho legislative session but Sen. Bert Brackett, a Republican rancher from Rogerson, believes it was one of the most important pieces of legislation to be passed.

"We don't want anything to put a damper on landowners' willingness to enter into conservation agreements," he said. "People should not be punished for doing the right thing."

Rep. Steven Miller, a Republican farmer and rancher from Fairfield and the bill's sponsor, said the law should give landowners more confidence when they're considering entering into voluntary conservation agreements.

Miller is the superintendent of the Camas Soil Conservation District and past president of the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts.

"Farmers and ranchers are not that crazy about having everyone look at their business information," he said. "This

should give them a little more incentive, or less of a disincentive, to work with conservation districts in these types of efforts."

Without this type of exemption, landowners are cautious about entering into voluntary conservation agreements, said Steve Thompson, the district conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Thompson oversees the agency's work with the Gooding and Camas county soil conservation districts, which led the effort to craft House Bill 291.

"They are less likely to develop a voluntary plan if their personal and private business information isn't protected," he said. But with the exemption, "they will be more willing to step up and do some conservation planning."

If someone submits a Freedom of Information Act request with NRCS about a voluntary conservation agreement, the agency would redact any personal and sensitive information on behalf of the landowner and would only release information about how the resource will be benefited and the conservation practices that will be used, Thompson said.

Because of the new Idaho law, landowners who enter into voluntary stewardship agreements to protect sage grouse with local soil conservation districts will now enjoy that same type of protection.



Courtesy of Idaho Conservation League

Legislation creating a Boulder-White Clouds wilderness in Central Idaho has passed the U.S. House Resources Committee.

Idaho wilderness bill advances in House

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Legislation creating a wilderness area within Central Idaho's Boulder-White Cloud Range unanimously passed the U.S. House Resources Committee on July 9 as its companion bill in the Senate awaits action.

The bill, HR 1138, was introduced by Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho. Sen. Jim Risch, also R-Idaho, sponsored S. 538 as a companion bill, which

awaits final mark-up in the Senate Resources Committee.

Simpson has emphasized that he drafted his Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Jerry Peak Wilderness Additions Act with input and support from a broad group of stakeholders, including environmental interests and ranching industry representatives.

"To say I am pleased about the Boulder-White Cloud bill moving forward would be an understatement," Simpson said in a press release. "For more

than a decade, Idahoans of all walks of life have worked tirelessly on this legislation."

Simpson spokeswoman Nikki Wallace said the wilderness legislation would be a far better alternative to efforts to establish a national monument through presidential decree, which would be created with far less local input. Wallace said the Obama administration has granted Simpson time to pursue an "Idaho solution," but "the threat is very real of it becoming a national monument.

"There are still many organizations that would like to see a national monument and still work is being done to advance national monument status," Wallace said.

Many ranchers who utilize the public land worry a monument would be more restrictive on grazing. According to the Idaho Cattle Association, the proposed wilderness area includes about 7,000 animal unit months of grazing land, but a monument would be much more expansive.

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Thresher pilots 'act of God' clause for wheat

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

BLACKFOOT, Idaho — A major Eastern Idaho wheat buyer is experimenting with an "act of God" clause in its 2015 contracting, hoping to make wheat more competitive with other crops.

Thresher Artisan Wheat has offered the clause on a pilot basis for a limited acreage to a select number of growers.

Thresher Chief Operating Officer Don Wille said the clause specifies that growers needn't deliver wheat if they don't yield the contracted volume.

Wille said the program is aimed at helping growers mitigate damage, such as the wide-

spread sprout damage to grain crops following heavy rainfall last August.

Contracts for other crops, such as barley, have long offered growers an act of God clause.

"We had to do something to see if we could make wheat a little more competitive with barley," Wille said.

Blaine Jacobson, executive director of the Idaho Wheat Commission, considers the pilot program to be significant and hopes it will set a precedent that Thresher and other grain buyers will follow. Jacobson said when weather reduces yields, wheat growers are sometimes forced to purchase other wheat to fulfill their contracts, or to convince their elevators to allow them to deliver the following year.



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Wheat grows in Rockland, Idaho. Thresher Artisan Wheat experimented with an "act of God" clause, allowing growers the option not to fill their contracts if weather conditions prevent them from producing the necessary amount.

"It's something that has kept wheat at a disadvantage when spring planting decisions are being made," Jacobson said. "If Thresher can make it work for them, it would be a huge step forward."

Idaho Falls grower Matt Gellings forward contracted about half of his 2015 crop to Thresher, with delivery in De-

ember. The act of God clause was no longer available for his sale, but he hopes to have the opportunity to take advantage of it in the future.

"I don't dare sell more than half unless I've got it in the bin, especially after last year," Gellings said. "Nobody knew that (sprout damage) was coming, and it hurt a lot of people."

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