



Capital Press

The West's **Ag** Weekly

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2015

★ VOLUME 88, NUMBER 32

WWW.CAPITALPRESS.COM

\$2.00

Researchers use wild potatoes to develop better hybrids

Researchers collect native varieties to broaden gene pool for future hybrids

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

John Bamberg has explored one of the nation's most important American Indian archaeological sites, but instead of seeking clues to a past civilization, he was searching for solutions to many of the challenges facing the potato industry.

Bamberg, a project leader at the USDA Potato Introduction Station in Sturgeon Bay, Wis., has discovered that Mesa Verde National Park in southwest Colorado is not only home to cliff-dwelling Ancestral Pueblos, but also to the nation's most diverse population of a wild potato species.

Bamberg's facility maintains seed and tissue cultures of wild potato populations from around the world. To the researchers and breeders who request material from him, wild spuds represent a vast pool of genes that may allow them to transfer desirable traits such as disease and pest resistance to new potato varieties they develop.

Bamberg speculates potatoes were a staple of the diet of Mesa Verde's ancient inhabitants. The potatoes were likely obtained via a trade route extending into Central and South America, where they originated.

"There's an absolutely gigantic population (of potatoes) there," Bamberg said. At Mesa Verde

Turn to WILD, Page 12



Large cultivated potatoes on the left are compared with smaller, wild potatoes on the right.

INTO THE

WILD



Photos courtesy of John Bamberg: John Bamberg is the project leader at the Potato Introduction Station in Sturgeon Bay, Wis., which houses the U.S. collection of wild potato material from throughout the world.



"There are species you can look at and say, 'Oh, that's a potato.' Others look very strange, with leaves almost like marigolds or African violets."

John Bamberg, project leader at the USDA Potato Introduction Station in Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

Army Corps memos disparage EPA over WOTUS

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Internal memos from an Army Corps of Engineers top official to the Environmental Protection Agency contend the draft final rule defining waters of the United States is indefensible in court, reduces the government's jurisdiction over certain waters now covered by the Clean Water Act, and will require the Corps to conduct an environmental impact statement before it can be implemented.

The memos, written before the rule's release by Maj. Gen. John Peabody, deputy commanding general for civil and emergency operations, charge that the EPA disregarded the Corps' concerns.

The memos were put on the record by Rep. Paul Gosar, R-Ariz. of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

Peabody's April 27 memo to Jo-Ellen Darby, assistant secretary of the Army for civil works, states: "As we have discussed throughout the rulemaking process for WOTUS over the last several months, the Corps of Engineers has serious concerns about certain aspects of the draft final rule."

The memo contends that a review of the draft final rule by the Corps' legal and regulatory staff found the rule "continues to depart significantly from the version provided for public comment, and that the Corps' recommendations related to our most serious concerns have gone unaddressed."

"The rule's contradictions with legal principles generate multiple legal and technical consequences that, in the view of the Corps, would be fatal to the rule in its current form."

The Corps' legal analysis found that if "serious flaws" were not corrected, the rule would be "legally vulnerable, difficult to defend in court, difficult for the Corps to explain or justify, and challenging for the Corps to implement."

It further found the final rule abandoned "sound principles of science" in the proposed draft and "introduced indefensible provisions into the rule."

Turn to WOTUS, Page 12

Earlier drought planning needed, ag director says

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

EAST WENATCHEE, Wash. — State agencies, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and major irrigation districts should start planning for drought next year as soon as this year's irrigation season is over, the new director of the state Department of Agriculture says.

Water will be a big issue and the state needs to be better prepared, Agriculture Director Derek Sandison told about 100 members of the Chelan-Douglas Farm Bureau at their annual barbecue on Aug. 4.

"In 2014, we came pretty close to drought but we caught up on snowpack late in the



Photo courtesy of Washington Department of Ecology: Office of Columbia River Director Derek Sandison stands on Pinto Dam in Grant County with Brook Lake in the background in this photo from July 2014 provided by the Washington Department of Ecology. Sandison, who has an extensive background in water issues, has been appointed state agriculture director.

season. We dodged a bullet," Sandison said. Last winter, everyone kept thinking there would be another "March Miracle," but there wasn't, he said. The rain didn't turn into snow and "it caught us flat-footed in water leasing," said Sandison, who was director of the state Department of Ecology's Office of the Columbia River at the time.

Growers in the Roza Irrigation District of the Yakima Valley had made planting decisions before Ecology approved leasing, he said. Then there were delays in appropriations of drought response funding, he said.

With the high probability of another warm, dry winter, everyone needs to be better prepared, Sandison said. Agencies need to work to improve water storage and Ecology, Agriculture, Reclamation and major irrigation districts should start talking about next year soon, he said.

"The message for the long run is we can't take our eye off the ball," he said. U.S. Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., also mentioned water, forest management to prevent forest fires, food safety and other issues in brief remarks. He said he's still optimistic about immigration reform and that he always seeks advice from the Farm Bureau. Newhouse, a Sunnyside grower, is a former director of the state Department of Agriculture and a former state legislator. He and his father were both county Farm Bureau presidents.



Harvest the Savings

Reap the rewards in this week's Harvest Choice Special Values. Available online. Prices good through August 12.



598 N. Wilbur Ave., Walla Walla • Mon-Sat 8-7, Sun 10-6 • www.cascadefarmandoutdoor.com



7 29467 70125 0