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Idaho

Farm super takes over Tetonia facility

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

TETONIA, Idaho — Rather than choosing another off-site crop researcher to head its Tetonia Research & Extension Center, University of Idaho administrators have put their faith in a farm supervisor who has been directly involved in the facility's daily operations since 1985.

Todd Carter, who lives at the research center, is already well versed in most of the superintendent's duties, having overseen the station's planting, harvesting and irrigation and serving as a point of contact for its frequent visitors for

three decades.

"Just being on site, Todd will have a better appreciation for the day-to-day operations, and that's really what the oversight of a superintendent is," said Mark McGuire, who assumed the role of UI's interim associate dean of research and director of the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station this month.

Carter, a Sugar-Salem High School graduate who was raised on a local potato and grain farm, replaces Phil Nolte, a UI Extension potato pathologist stationed in Idaho Falls. Nolte recently retired.

Carter will continue his normal work maintaining

equipment, tending fields and running a greenhouse that produces pre-nuclear potato seeds, which are the first generation of seeds in the UI and USDA Agricultural Research Service potato breeding program. He'll also be tasked with attending more meetings, developing a budget and making planting decisions, based on university input about cereal foundation seed sales.

"I think it's a lot different than just farming. You've got lots of different varieties



Carter

throughout the years," Carter said of running a research farm.

At the height of the recession, the station was targeted for closure, but remained open thanks to investments from Idaho's wheat, potato and barley commissions.

The facility once had six full-time workers. Carter now oversees one full-time assistant, a summer worker and a part-time secretary, but the university has assumed the full financial responsibility for the center and has invested in new equipment, new siding for buildings and a new equipment storage building.

Nolte believes Carter's ex-

perience makes him the ideal candidate to head the facility.

"I think Todd is the perfect person for that," Nolte said. "He's got all of those skills, he knows the land — I have a feeling they'll be able to go forward without any kind of rough transition."

Carter explained the 580-acre Tetonia station, which is at 6,200 feet of elevation, plays a critical role in helping UI and USDA-ARS barley and wheat breeders evaluate experimental lines in a high-elevation, short-season setting. The facility also produces foundation oat, barley and wheat seed, which is clean seed for other cereal

seed growers to utilize. Three oat fields and a barley field are now planted to foundation seed, Carter said.

He said 130 acres of supplemental wheat crops help support the station and the salary of its part-time secretary. Last season, supplemental crops generated \$38,000, he said.

For the potato breeding program, the high-elevation facility has little disease pressure, ideal for expanding early generation experimental seed in fields. The facility also hosts winter wheat snow mold trials, and Carter said a quinoa trial is in the planning stages.

IPC extends Potato Bowl contract

EAGLE, Idaho — The Idaho Potato Commission has agreed in principle to a \$900,000 contract extension securing the naming rights of the Boise-based Famous Idaho Potato Bowl through 2018.

The original six-year contract, valued at \$2.49 million, changing the name of the former Humanitarian Bowl, hosted at Boise State University, expires after the 2016 bowl game. Under the terms of the extension, IPC will pay \$450,000 for the naming rights of both the 2017 and 2018 bowl games.

The 2015 bowl game is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. MT on Dec. 22. The Famous Idaho Potato Bowl, which includes teams from the Mountain West and Mid-American conferences, is one of 13 collegiate bowl games owned by ESPN Events, a division of ESPN.

"We are excited to extend our relationship with the Idaho Potato Commission through the 2018 bowl season," bowl executive director Kevin McDonald said in the press release. "A college bowl game in the state of Idaho celebrating the potato industry makes perfect sense."

Under the original contract, IPC paid \$375,000 per year for the naming rights in 2011 and 2012, \$420,000 per year for the 2013 and 2014 games and \$450,000 per year for the 2015 and 2016 games. IPC also paid an \$80,000 one-time rebranding fee.

The contract provided IPC a comprehensive advertising package including: recognition in game signage, video board advertisements, public address announcements and the game logo; two full pages of advertising in the game program, four 30-second advertising spots during the radio broadcast; and five 30-second advertising spots during the ESPN television broadcast.

In its 19th season, the bowl at BSU's Albertsons Stadium is the longest-running cold weather bowl game.

Interest up in mixed Bannock County Fair

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

DOWNEY, Idaho — Bannock County Fair organizers say their century-old event drew more visitors and entries in animal projects and other competitions this summer, following its consolidation with an urban-themed fair serving the northern portion of the county.

Attendance had been sparse at the North Bannock County Fair, formerly hosted in Pocatello, and fair organizers say most 4-H animal projects have historically enrolled at the South Fair in Downey, anyway.

Hosting a single rural fair in Downey Aug. 3-8 helped the county boost enrollment in animal competitions and draw better entertainers, said fair superintendent Piney Morrison.

Despite high calf prices, Morrison said the steer category had 16 animals, compared with nine last season. Youths also entered more than 30 animals in both the lamb and pig categories.

"We know our fair, because it's the country, we get the attendance and we get the animals, so I feel like the taxpayers felt on this end of the county it was a huge benefit," Morrison said.

The theme of this year's fair, "United We Stand," recognized both the patriotic nature of the county and the added strength of a combined fair, Morrison explained.

Specific attendance numbers were unavailable, since fair admission is free, but



John O'Connell/Capital Press
Gus Johnson, 10, wearing the red cap, watches as Earnest Newsome judges his show chicken, Roxie, during the Bannock County Fair on Aug. 7.

Morrison said many food vendors sold out and reported their strongest sales ever for Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday.

"Saturday was huge, and it was way more than our Saturday had ever been," Morrison said.

On Wednesday, the fair hosted a concert featuring Home Free, the winning band from season four of NBC's The Sing Off. Morrison said if not for extra revenue diverted from the defunct North Fair, she wouldn't have had the budget to land Home Free.

Melinda Harper, with the Idaho Rural Water Association, has traveled to fairs throughout the state distributing test kits for nitrates in rural wells and leaks in toilets.



John O'Connell/Capital Press
Brooklyn Wilde, 9, of Inkom, practices leading a steer Aug. 7 at the Bannock County Fair in Downey, Idaho.

"So far this year, this is the best fair I've been to,"

Harper said. "The kids have been busy."

"Saturday was huge, and it was way more than our Saturday had ever been."

Piney Morrison
Fair Superintendent

The fair also featured unusual agricultural-themed events, such as a competition in which contestants were tasked with removing ear tags from soapy pigs while being sprayed with soapy water.

Morrison said youth animal projects, however, are the centerpiece of the fair.

Jacob McNabb, 14, of Inkom, won reserve champion for quality with his steer. The calf came from his family's herd, and he believes his participation in an animal project will help him better contribute to the ranch.

"It gives me more experience with animals and how different some animals can be than others," McNabb said.

For Brooklyn Wilde, a 9-year-old Inkom resident, the fair provided a stage on which to exceed her own expectations. In her first year of fair competition, Wilde showed the top goat, earning the right to advance to the Round Robin competition, where each champion had to show every winning animal.

"This is a little bit of a crash course," her mother, Jana Wilde, said as the girl practiced leading the winning steer. "We're super proud of her because she's a first-year in 4-H going into the Round Robin."

Payments to Idaho ag fell 23 percent in 2014

Federal payments to state lower percentage of income than national average

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Federal government payments to Idaho farmers and ranchers declined rapidly in 2014 and accounted for a tiny percentage of the state's total net farm income.

According to estimates by University of Idaho agricultural economists, federal payments to Idaho agriculture totaled \$99 million

during fiscal year 2014, a 23 percent decrease compared with 2013.

That decrease continues a 14-year decline in government payments to Idaho farmers and ranchers and federal payments to Idaho agriculture have declined by more than 60 percent since 2000.

In inflation-adjusted dollars, government payments to Idaho agriculture peaked at \$398 million during the farm

financial crisis in 1986.

"Government payments to Idaho agriculture continue to decline," said UI ag economist Garth Taylor. "They are a minor part of Idaho agriculture."

According to UI estimates, government payments accounted for 2.2 percent of Idaho's total net farm income in fiscal 2014, while they contributed 10.9 percent to total U.S. net farm income.

Compared with the rest of

the nation on average, "Idaho agriculture doesn't farm the government," said UI ag economist Ben Eborn.

Taylor believes Idaho agriculture's comparatively minor reliance on government payments has strengthened the state's farming sector.

"Government payments are such a small proportion of Idaho farmers' income," he said. "As a result, Idaho agriculture is far more nimble in what we do. In my opinion, in the long term it's made farmers in Idaho far more responsive to prices, markets and international demand than farmers in the Midwest."

Production support payments accounted for 50 percent of all government payments to Idaho producers in 2014, conservation program payments accounted for 45 percent of the total and the rest was in the form of emergency program payments.

Because of the new farm bill, it's unclear how federal government payments to Idaho farmers will shake out this year, Eborn said. That depends largely on how commodity prices fare and what level of coverage people signed up for, he said.

However, it's unlikely government payments to Idaho farmers will increase this



Sean Ellis/Capital Press
Wheat is harvested in a southwestern Idaho field July 8. Federal government payments to Idaho farmers and ranchers declined 23 percent to \$99 million in fiscal 2014.

year, he added.

"It's probably going to be lower unless commodity prices really take a plunge," he said.

Direct production support, which accounted for half of government payments to Idaho farmers in 2014, is gone in the new farm bill, but conservation program payments will stay intact, Taylor said.

It remains to be seen what the new farm bill's shift toward insurance programs will mean for Idaho in terms of government payments, he added.

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