

Washington



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Spokane TV weatherman Tom Sherry stands with representatives of the Spokane County Cattlemen, Rosauers grocery stores and the Washington Beef Commission to mark the Beef Counts program's \$20,000 donation to the Second Harvest food bank Sept. 9 in Spokane, Wash.

Beef industry donates \$20,000 to Spokane area food bank

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

SPOKANE — Washington cattle ranchers and beef processors have donated more than \$20,000 to help feed the region's needy.

The industry's Beef Counts program recently capped a summer-long promotion with Second Harvest food bank, Rosauers grocery stores and Agri Beef Co. by giving the beef to Spokane families in need.

Proceeds from every beef sale at Rosauers in Spokane went directly to the Beef Counts program at Second Harvest, said Rob Noel, director of channel marketing for the Washington Beef Commission.

The commission presented

a check for more than \$20,600. The total includes matching funds from Agri Beef, which processes donated beef at its Yakima, Wash., plant, and donates time and resources to the program.

"Our goal is to be able to raise enough through these promotional, fund-raising efforts to allow Second Harvest to have a year-round supply of beef they can order," Noel said. "Beef has a lot of great nutritional value, and food banks just don't get enough of it."

Quality protein makes up roughly 4 percent of donated food, said Melissa Cloninger, director of donor relations for Second Harvest.

"Beef is costly, especially for families who are struggling

to put enough food on the table," Cloninger said. Protein helps provide a balanced diet, she said.

"We are seeing a higher level of need all year long, and families seeking assistance more chronically than 12 years ago," Cloninger said. "Because of this last great recession and recovery, when wages are not quite back to pre-recession wages, they're working but they just can't make ends meet."

Noel said the Beef Counts program will "absolutely" continue. Since 2010, it has raised more than \$460,000, or roughly 750,000 beef servings.

Ranchers also donate to the program, Noel said. Ranchers donate a calf during the Beef Counts Rollover Auction every

fall in Toppenish, Wash., and auction it repeatedly. Last year, ranchers raised \$26,000 in 30 minutes, a figure also matched by Agri Beef, Noel said.

Spokane County Cattlemen members distributed one-pound ground beef packages to families in need, alongside other Washington products — potatoes, plums, bread and apples.

"This allows the local community to see the producers in action," Noel said.

Cloninger singled out the food industry, particularly retail grocers, wholesalers and producers, for their efforts.

"If it weren't for the generosity of the entire community, we wouldn't be able to do nearly the work we do in feeding hungry people," she said.

Another step taken for bringing water to Odessa Subarea

Move allows revenue bonds to pay for water distribution

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The East Columbia Basin Irrigation District board has taken another step toward bringing Columbia River water to farms in the Odessa Subarea that are running out of groundwater used for irrigation.

The district board has approved a 40-year renewal of its master water service contract with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, clearing the way for issuing 30-year revenue bonds to pay for the infrastructure, said Levi Johnson, development coordinator for the irrigation district.

The contract covers coordinated conservation water and water from the Lake Roosevelt incremental releases program, he said. These water supplies are authorized for groundwater replacement in the Odessa Subarea.

The district board has entered into water service contracts with landowners on 7,000 acres. Roughly 10,000 acres are slated to get water via the 47.5 distribution system on the East Low Canal, so named for its location 47.5 miles along the canal system.

Before the end of the year, the district plans to issue tax-exempt municipal reve-

nue bonds for financing the distribution system. The district will take on the bonded indebtedness and service it through annual charges to the landowners who receive the water, Johnson said.

The charges help cover the debt the district is taking on to build the delivery system, including pressurized pipelines and pump plants, and pay for the remaining East Low Canal improvements.

Without the certainty provided by the contract renewal, bonds would likely have needed higher interest rates, Johnson said.

The lower interest rates will benefit the farmers, said Mike Schwisow, director of government relations for the Columbia Basin Development League.

The league supports completion of the Columbia Basin Project.

The district board will next begin negotiations with the Bureau of Reclamation to gain contractual authority to deliver water to 70,000 acres covered under the Odessa Subarea Special Study.

Water will be provided to those acres through six additional delivery systems, Johnson said. More revenue bonds will be issued to finance construction of those systems.

Revenue bonds are loans that are repaid with the money received from the people who benefit from the specific projects that are financed.

The irrigation district hopes to complete the designs in 2016, Johnson said.

Washington state vineyards busy with earliest harvest

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

EAST WENATCHEE, Wash. — It's one of hundreds of small wineries in the state, but Martin Scott Winery may be unique when it comes to spectacular settings and view.

Nestled in a ravine and a high bluff overlooking the Columbia River south of East Wenatchee, the winery is in its 16th year of production with just 3 acres of vineyard and its own facilities where all 1,000 cases of wine per year are made.

Flowers adorn a wrought iron gate entry. The owners, Mike and Judi Scott, have hosted weddings on the carefully manicured grounds surrounding their home and tasting room.

"We sell locally. We're not the smallest winery in the state, but we are small and have no design to grow," Mike Scott said.

His crew hand-picked Pinot Gris the morning of Sept. 10 and turned to pressing and the start of fermentation.

Harvest is earlier than usual throughout Central Washington because of a mild, dry winter and warm spring.

"We started picking Sauvignon Blanc on Aug. 12 in the Yakima Valley. That's our earliest start on record," said Kevin Corliss, vice president of viticulture for Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, the state's largest wine producer.

The company's prior earliest start was Aug. 15, 1987. Labor Day to Halloween is the industry's normal harvest



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Mike Scott, co-owner of Martin Scott Winery in East Wenatchee, Wash., looks at Pinot Gris harvested Sept. 10. He and his wife, Judi, are among hundreds of owners of small vineyards and wineries in the state.

window.

With such an early start, vineyard operators are hoping for an early ending, but winemakers want that full

month of October for leeway in choosing optimal picking times on each variety to maximize flavor, Corliss said.

The Washington Associa-

tion of Wine Grape Growers, in Cashmere, estimates the crop at 231,192 tons. That's up from 227,000 in 2014 and would be more if not for prolonged, excessive heat in June and early July, said Vicky Scharlau, association executive director.

"The heat impacts different varieties differently but it definitely has an impact. Growers and winemakers say it provides concentrated flavors which is a good thing," Scharlau said.

Flavor profiling and targeting the style of wine is a "science and art," she said. "Growers like to get grapes off the vine, but winemakers are looking for that certain kind of flavor."

The dry season helped hold down fungal diseases, and

drought in the Yakima Valley hasn't had a huge impact on wine grapes, Corliss said.

"Maybe a few growers have had things a little drier than they wanted, but wine grapes are pretty durable on water stress," he said.

Washington is second only to California in wine and wine grape production. Washington has 350-plus growers, 53,355 bearing acres and more than 850 wineries producing 12.5 million cases annually. Winery revenue is estimated at \$1 billion annually by the state wine commission.

The state Department of Ecology is behind on a schedule it outlined at the association's annual convention in February to regulate waste water discharge of wineries, Scharlau said.

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*Brad Potts
Commercial Team Lead, Washington Trust Bank*

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