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## Idaho

# Chance meeting results in African student touring Idaho farm country

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — A friendship that started as a conversation in a hotel lobby has resulted in a 10-day tour of Idaho farm country for a young African man with a hunger for agriculture.

Cedric Nwafor, 26, from Cameroon, met members of Leadership Idaho Agriculture in 2014 while he was working as a bellman in a Washington, D.C., hotel.

LIA trains community and business leaders in Idaho to be advocates for agriculture and members of the group were in D.C. for an advanced training experience when they met and befriended Nwafor, who has lived in the United States for five years and is working toward becoming a U.S. citizen.

During a return visit to D.C. this April, the group met Nwafor at a restaurant and heard about his interest in agriculture and how he wants to eventually take best farming practices back to Africa to help feed people there.

He also said he would like to visit Idaho some day so he could see what real agriculture is all about.

LIA members agreed that night to help him achieve that dream and funded his 10-day trip to Idaho, which began Sept. 10.

The tour included visits to multiple farms, livestock operations and processing operations.

Nwafor told the Capital Press Sept. 15 that he was blown away by the depth of farming in this area and its use



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

JC Watson Co. production manager Duane Chamberlain, left, gives Cedric Nwafor a tour of the company's onion packing facility in Parma Sept. 15. Leadership Idaho Agriculture members took Nwafor on a 10-day tour of Idaho farm country after learning of his interest in agriculture.

of technology.

"I used to think philosophers were smart but now I know farmers are smarter," he said.

Parma farmer John Hartman, one of a dozen LIA alumni who showed Nwafor around farm country, said that type of in-depth tour of agriculture would benefit anyone.

"(LIA) gave him quite a gift," Hartman said. "You don't get a tour like this every day. You can tell people all this stuff but some times showing them is a whole different deal."

Nwafor agreed.

"One day here is like a semester in college," he said.

"Getting to see these things is way more educational than sitting in a classroom and writing thesis topics about it."

Meridian farmer Drew Eggers took Nwafor on a tour of the valley's irrigation and dam system, showed him a mint still and rode with him on a corn chopper.

"He was very inquisitive, very attentive and asked a lot of questions," Eggers said. "He was a joy to have around."

LIA Development Director Kendra Dustin said a lot of people and groups involved with agriculture have invested in the leadership training program and the group wants to start providing more of these

types of experiences.

"It's time for us to make an investment in other people," she said.

Nwafor, who is studying business with an emphasis in agriculture at the University of Maryland, said the visit made a huge impact on him.

"After coming to Idaho, things are really changing now in my mind; I'm seeing more opportunities in focusing more on agriculture and economics," he said. "I want to keep the momentum going because I have gained so much information here. I do believe I chose the best state ... to come and learn all of this."

# Habitat key to attracting beneficial insects, farmers told

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

MIDDLETON, Idaho — During a tour of an organic farm Sept. 16, farmers were shown how to increase habitat to attract pollinators and other beneficial insects.

If farmers make the effort to provide habitat for beneficial insects, the effort will pay off, said Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides Director Jennifer Miller.

"Yes, you build it and they will come," she said to about 35 people who attended the farm tour, which was sponsored by NCAP and the Xerces Society.

The three-hour tour was held at Purple Sage Farms, a 50-acre organic operation that grows fresh herbs and specialty produce in greenhouses and fields.

Purple Sage co-owner Mike Sommer said the farm has made a concerted effort for about two years to attract beneficial insects by adding habitat enhancements where it can.

That includes letting crops flower for another week or so after harvest instead of planting another crop right away, not tilling over the greenhouses all at once but doing it in sec-



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

People look at flowering plants that provide habitat for pollinators and other beneficial insects at Purple Sage Farms Sept. 16. A tour of the farm was held to show other farmers how they can attract beneficial insects through basic habitat improvements.

tions, and leaving the sides of greenhouses untilled to provide some permanent habitat for insects.

The Sommers are also planting starts in a 325 by 12 foot hedgerow that will provide permanent habitat for insects. The hedgerow is being installed next to the greenhouses to enable pollinators to move freely between the two.

The farm also uses annual plantings and cover crops to support insects.

Sommer said while the farm hasn't conducted any insect surveys, "anecdotally I'd say it is making a difference.

I'm liking what I'm seeing so far."

Jessa Kay Cruz, the Xerces Society's senior pollinator conservation specialist, said wildflower plantings are also important for attracting and sustaining pollinators.

Sustaining pollinators and other beneficial insects provide two main benefits, she said.

"One, you're helping pollinators and a lot of pollinator species are in decline, so you're being a great environmental steward," Cruz said. "The other huge benefit is to your farm. You're making your farm more resilient. Instead of

just having honeybees to pollinate your crops, you have all these other native bees that can help. Then you have a lot of beneficial insects that can help reduce the pest populations on your farm."

She said she works with a lot of large almond producers in California who are adding habitat improvements to attract beneficial insects.

"It's not just something for small organic farmers; it's something for everyone," she said.

The NCAP and Xerces Society have developed an assessment guide for Southern Idaho that can help farmers determine the best way to make habitat improvements to attract beneficial insects.

"It's been tested for Idaho ... and can help you figure out where to start," Miller said. "It's a really handy tool that can simplify the process and help people make meaningful changes."

The Idaho guide can be found by going to the Xerces Society website at [www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org) and typing the key words "Idaho pollinator guide" into the site's search engine. The results will include assessment guides for other areas as well.

# Feds plan wild-horse sanctuary in SW Idaho

By KEITH RIDLER  
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A 150-square-mile area in southwestern Idaho will become home for several hundred non-reproducing wild horses from around the West that have failed to be adopted, federal officials say.

"It would sort of act as a sanctuary area," said Heidi Whitlatch of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

The agency on Monday announced the release of its approved Resource Management Plan for the Jarbidge Field Office.

The herd of wild horses in the Saylor Creek Herd Management Area will be sterilized either chemically or physically and kept to between 50 and 200 horses, said Whitlatch, the plan's project manager. Officials said that process is likely years away, though, as details are worked out.

The herd will be replenished with wild horses from Idaho and sometimes other states, she said. Wild horses are sometimes rounded up and offered for adoption when their numbers exceed the amount of food available to support them. But not all the horses get adopted.

Currently, the Bureau of Land Management has about 47,000 wild horses and burros that are being held and fed in corrals and pastures.

The 72-page Range Management Plan, or RMP, guides

management of everything from wild horses to cattle grazing to recreation to sage grouse habitat restoration on the 2,200-square-mile Jarbidge Field Office that contains desert canyons and remote rangelands.

"One thing that's very different about this RMP is that we will be moving this herd from a producing herd to a nonproducing herd," Whitlatch said.

Anne Novak, executive director of the wild-horse advocate group Protect Mustangs, said the federal agency is making a mistake.

"These are not feral cats," she said. "These are wild horses that have a very dynamic social structure. They have a whole herd dynamic that's going to be completely ruined by sterilizing them."

Heather Tiel-Nelson of the Bureau of Land Management said one of the options in the management plan was removing wild horses from the area altogether because they have no natural water supply. But she said the agency ultimately decided to have a non-reproducing herd.

The herd twice since 2006 has been rounded up and held in the agency's Boise Wild Horse Corrals after wildfires destroyed rangeland forage, she said.

"These horses do tend to be fairly familiar with people," she said. "They tend to roam in areas that are fairly accessible for people to go out and see them."

# Groups upset after release of range management plan

By KEITH RIDLER  
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A new federal land management plan for southwest Idaho and northern Nevada created after the settlement of a lawsuit aimed at reducing cattle grazing has been released — and it allows an increase.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management last week approved its Resource Management Plan for the Jarbidge Field Office. The settlement agreement with conservationists was reached in 2005.

"This demonstrates that the BLM cannot be trusted to put the priority of wildlife and multiple use over cowboys," said Todd Tucci, an attorney for Advocates for the West representing Western Watersheds Project. "Cowboys are running the show."

The conservation group will consider another lawsuit, Tucci said. "We can't let an increase in cattle go unchallenged," he said.

The previous plan allowed up to 260,000 animal unit months, which increased to 326,000 under the new plan. The BLM defines an animal unit month as the amount of forage needed to sustain one cow and her calf, one horse, or five sheep or goats for a month.

In the 76-page plan, the BLM cited the 2005 federal lawsuit settlement agreement with Western Watersheds Project as one of the reasons for creating the new plan for the 1.4 million acres of public lands in the Jarbidge Field Office.

In the decade during the settlement agreement and the release of the new plan, the area has been hit by repeated giant rangeland wildfires — typically driven by invasive and fire-prone cheatgrass. Some areas have burned multiple times, adding up to more than a million acres burned over the years.

Heidi Whitlatch, project manager for the Rangeland Management Plan, said the wildfires in the area and other parts of the state often pulled workers off the project and accounted for the length of time needed to complete the plan.

"We've had a lot of hurdles that came up," Whitlatch said. "It's taken us quite a while to get this process completed, and we're very happy that we finally have."

Rehabilitation efforts in the burned areas, she said, resulted in the planting of grasses to prevent non-desirable invasive species, particularly cheatgrass, from returning. She said the initial years of the new Range Management Plan call for increased grazing and more cattle because of the additional forage with the planted grasses.

"We've tried hard to have different treatments that will allow the land to better recover after some of these wildfires that we've had," she said. "So we've tried to build into it resiliency."

Over the years, she said, the number of animal unit months will be reduced to 279,000 as more native plants and shrubs return.

Western Watersheds Project has a history of fighting against the planting of non-native seeds after a wildfire. The group contends that it can lead to turning sagebrush steppe needed by wildlife, such as sage grouse, into pastureland for cattle.

"We know where this ends," said Tucci. "It ends in the extirpation of wildlife."

The BLM plan also calls for sterilizing a herd of about 200 wild horses in the area, which was blasted by the American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign.

That group in a statement called it a "pest control" act for ranchers "who view mustangs as competition for cheap, taxpayer subsidized grazing on public lands."

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