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Idaho

USPB promotion aims to restore Japanese fry demand

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

The U.S. Potato Board is implementing a plan to restore Japanese demand for U.S. french fries, following the first drop in frozen potato exports to the country in 40 years.

The board's strategy includes a social media campaign, promotion of an original song about U.S. fries and video advertising in Japanese subway stations.

During the marketing year ending in June 2014, Japan accounted for 29 percent of all U.S. frozen fry exports, purchasing \$336 million in product.

During the following marketing year, however, the val-



Courtesy of ILoVU website

The Japanese pop band ILoVU is seen in this photo. The band has recorded a song that promotes U.S. french fries.

ue of frozen U.S. fry exports to Japan dropped 23 percent to \$259 million. By volume, frozen exports dropped by 68,470 metric tons of finished product, according to USPB. USPB attributes much of the decline to a labor slow-

down at West Coast ports from October 2014 through February 2015. However, USPB officials note the volume of frozen exports from other countries was also down, indicating much of the decline was due to "continuing economic doldrums in the country" and "societally driven shifts away from western-style quick-service restaurant fare in the country."

"We're not only trying to regain our overall market share. We're also trying to rekindle consumer demand to eat and purchase fries," said USPB Chief Marketing Officer John Toasperm.

Toasperm said USPB during its March meeting allocated \$300,000 from its reserves toward regain-

ing market share in a few key countries. About a third of that extra funding will go to Japan, he said.

He said the supplemental programming in Japan started in August and should be completed within six months.

In the subway and train station in Tokyo, USPB has funded 30-second advertisements, played on a video loop emphasizing U.S. fries are fun and tasty.

The board has created a new consumer website on U.S. fries called Discovery Zone, featuring games, videos and contests with prizes for those who submit videos of themselves eating U.S. fries.

USPB's Japanese representative also developed

a song about U.S. fries and how much fun they are to eat. USPB hired dancers and produced a video. The Japanese teen pop group ILoVU liked the tune and started performing its own adaptation.

"We put it on the Internet, and somehow this pop group found out about it and decided they wanted to do it, and they asked if they could use it," Toasperm said. "We got this much broader and more excellent exposure beyond our video."

Though Toasperm said it's too early to measure the effectiveness of the program, he's pleased by the ongoing trend of Japanese restaurant chains switching back to U.S. fries from other sources found during the labor slowdown.

Companies to partner on handling mine waste

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

SODA SPRINGS, Idaho — The Canada-based fertilizer company Agrium plans to collaborate with a competitor, Monsanto, on waste disposal to address potential water-quality impacts of its proposed Caribou County phosphate mine.

The Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service issued a draft environmental impact statement on Agrium's planned Rasmussen Valley Mine in late September and will accept public comments on the unique mining proposal through Nov. 2.

The fertilizer mine would have a 4.8-year lifespan and would replace Agrium's Rasmussen Ridge Mine, located on the same ridge as its proposed mine. The company hopes to have the new mine open before Rasmussen Ridge runs out of ore at the end of 2017.

Agrium first submitted a plan for the proposed mine in January of 2011. That March, concerns about the plan's preferred alternative were vetted during a public scoping period. Based on the comments, Agrium included a new plan designed to reduce environmental impacts, called the Rasmussen Collaborative Alternative, which is now the agencies' preferred option.

"When they came back with the RCA, we think they really hit a home run regard-



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Phosphate ore is processed at Agrium's Conda Phosphate Operations facility in Soda Springs in this file photo from April of 2013. Public comment is now being taken on a draft environmental impact statement regarding Agrium's application for a new mine.

ing minimizing impacts and coming back with alternatives that really did address the issues," said Bill Volk, the BLMs planning and environmental coordinator.

Volk said five above-ground overburden piles included in the original plan raised concerns about the potential for selenium to leach into nearby Angus Creek. Under the improved plan,

the overburden will be used to fill in an open pit within Monsanto's nearby South Rasmussen Ridge Mine. Agrium also intends to share part of Monsanto's existing haul road, which will make for a longer and steeper haul but will reduce wetland impacts from more than 20 acres under the original plan to about a quarter of an acre.

"Certainly, it is a unique

situation we've entered into with Monsanto," said Jon Goode, Agrium's manager of phosphate special projects, adding the close proximity of Monsanto's mine presented the opportunity. "Both sides are comfortable there shouldn't be any liability issues. It's a mutually beneficial arrangement."

Volk believes the plan could lead to future partner-

ships between mining companies to improve their operations.

"It is the first time two mining companies here have gotten together to coordinate relative to waste disposal," Volk said. "This kind of cooperation is going to really benefit the kinds of environmental issues we have to deal with here."

The RCA also limits digging below the water table in the mine's southern portion and seeks to expand the lease by a couple of thousand feet to the south to capture additional ore. Furthermore, the agencies requested that Agrium extend its mine footprint a bit further to the north to maximize mineral recovery, Volk said.

For Agrium's proposal, the agencies also introduced a new analysis called a habitat equivalency assessment, which measures the lost habitat value of a mining area, even after the land is reclaimed.

To make up the difference, Agrium's contractor will implement an equivalent amount of habitat improvements at another location in the general area.

Monsanto is awaiting the release of a groundwater model this December to guide development of its own plans for the future Caldwell Canyon Mine, which would provide the company a 35-year supply of ore, said spokesman Trent Clark.

Council will weigh compensation for mining damage

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

SODA SPRINGS, Idaho — A council comprising state and federal agencies and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes has announced plans to commence an assessment of potential damage created by the release of mining contaminants in the Caribou County phosphate patch.

The Southeast Idaho Phosphate Mine Site Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Trustee Council is led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and also includes the Tribes, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The process will be similar to a court case, with a judge presiding, and could take several years to complete. The council has determined it's possible that environmental damage has occurred from mining. If the assessment determines damage did result from mining, the council will assign a value to present for the judge's consideration. The judge may then approve a settlement awarding funding to the agencies to use in addressing the damage.

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Satterlee takes helm of Idaho Grain Producers Association

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press



BOISE — Stacey Katseanes Satterlee, a southeast Idaho native, has taken over as the new executive director of Idaho Grain Producers Association.

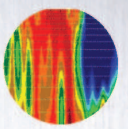


According to an IGPA news release, Satterlee, who grew up working on her family's farm, Triple K Farms Inc., spent 10 years in Washington, D.C., working for numerous agricultural associations, in-

cluding the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, Western Growers Association and National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

"I'm very excited and humbled by this opportunity to get back to my agricultural roots," Satterlee stated in the news release.

She takes over as head of IGPA from Travis Jones, who took a position with the office of Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, earlier this summer.

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