



Capital Press

The West's **Ag** Weekly

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2015

★ VOLUME 88, NUMBER 51

WWW.CAPITALPRESS.COM

\$2.00

As Congress dithers, parties become resigned to KBRA's demise

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. — While Congress dithers over the Klamath Basin's water agreements, the parties to the nearly 6-year-old deals are becoming resigned to their likely collapse at the year's end.

A panel of federal and state officials, tribal members, environmentalists and other participants in the 2010 accords has set a conference call for Dec. 28 to discuss termination of the Klamath Basin

Restoration Agreement — an ominous date for the deals' proponents and a light at the end of a long tunnel for their detractors.

PacifiCorp, whose plan to remove its four hydroelectric dams from the Klamath River sparked much of the controversy, is now resuming its effort to relicense the dams, company spokesman Bob Gravely said.

With the Karuk Tribe — a key water right holder on the Klamath River — already having walked away from the

pacts and the Klamath Tribes signaling their intention to do so, some of the irrigation districts that had signed on are also ready to walk away, said Greg Addington, the Klamath Water Users Association's executive director.

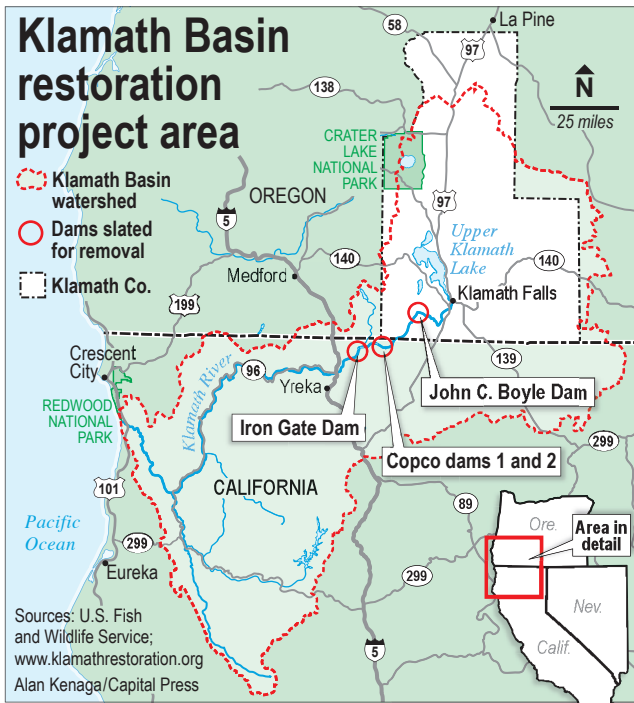
The result could be what many growers and others in the basin have been dreading — a return to drastic irrigation shutoffs and cutbacks and protracted court battles over water rights.

"Our members have made it clear," said tribal chairman

Don Gentry, whose Klamath Tribes have the most senior of water rights in the Upper Klamath Basin. "We've been honoring the KBRA since 2010. It's been five years, and our native fisheries and Lost River and shortnose suckers are in worse condition now than when we signed the agreements.

"We agreed to provide water at certain levels with the idea that legislation would move forward," he said.

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TROUBLED WATERS

Washington dairies face challenges over manure-handling practices

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

FERNDALE, Wash. — Whatcom County dairyman Rich Appel credits his three manure lagoons with keeping the area's water clean.

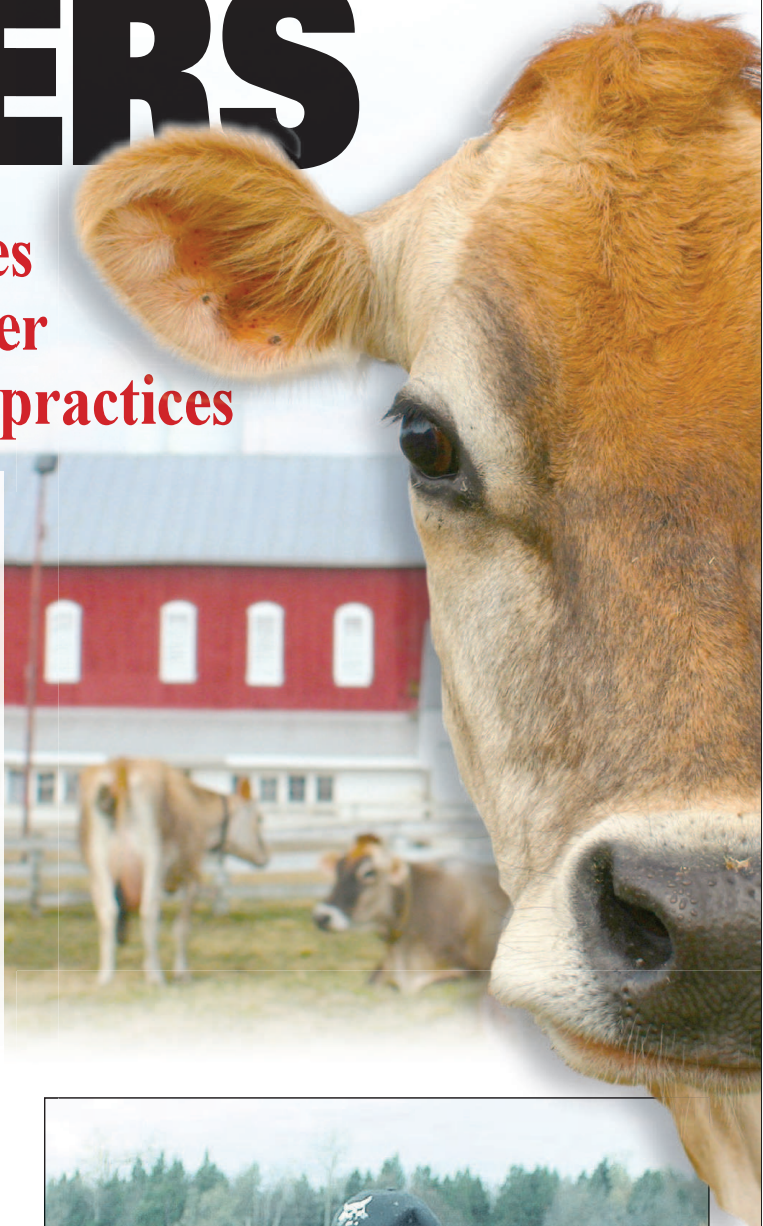
"They are absolute lifesavers to the environment," said Appel, who farms near the Canadian border in northwestern Washington. "They're just winners. Lagoons are great."

Dairy farmers around the state say much the same thing about lagoons. And they aren't the only ones. Lagoons are the government-sanctioned way to store manure and keep livestock waste from fouling streams and aquifers.

That's why dairy farmers have reacted with shock and disbelief at the idea voiced by critics and regulators that lagoons are under-regulated environmental time bombs, seeping pollutants into groundwater.

The critics' case was bolstered in January, when a federal judge, after sifting through stacks of studies and conflicting expert opinions, concluded in a landmark Yakima County lawsuit that the Cow Palace Dairy's 9 acres of lagoons may be the source of excess nitrates found in the groundwater.

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Don Jenkins/Capital Press
Whatcom County, Wash., dairyman Rich Appel calls his manure lagoons "lifesavers" for the environment. Manure lagoons are coming more scrutiny by the Washington Department of Ecology and environmental groups.

APHIS adopts permit requirement for GE wheat trials

By **ERIC MORTENSON**
Capital Press

Crop trials of genetically engineered wheat will require a permit under a stricter testing regimen adopted by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Reacting to discoveries of unauthorized GE wheat in Oregon in 2013 and in Montana in 2014 that threatened international markets, APHIS said the permit process will allow more site-specific control over field tests. Previously, variety developers were required only to notify APHIS of trials.

APHIS announced last fall it was considering a permit requirement and invited public comment. The agency's decision came this past week.

Pacific Northwest growers generally agree the APHIS decision is a reasonable response given the GE wheat scare in Eastern Oregon two years ago, but producers also are concerned about increased regulation and cost associated with permits, said Blake Rowe, CEO of the Oregon Wheat Commission.

In a news release, APHIS said the "difference between authorizing field trials with permits as opposed to notifications is small, but important."

With permits, APHIS can apply site-specific requirements based on science, risk, local farming practices and the "agro-ecology" of individual fields, the agency said. The permit structure will allow APHIS to set conditions that minimize the chance GE wheat will spread or persist in the environment, according to APHIS.

The agency said wheat is capable of extended dormancy. In dryland farming



Capital Press File

The federal government will now require permits for trials of genetically engineered wheat. Previously, developers were required only to notify the government of such field trials.

regions such as Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington, where there's little rain, commonly no irrigation and where no-till practices prevail, wheat seeds can survive in the soil more than two years.

"It can take longer than two years to assure you'll not have volunteer wheat come up on a trial site when the trial is finished," Rowe said. "I don't dispute that's probably accurate. The length of time it can persist and come up as a volunteer is probably at the heart of it."

APHIS said the permit requirement will strengthen U.S. wheat exports. It can help prevent "possible unintended mixing" with non-GE wheat that can damage trade.

Carol Mallory-Smith, an Oregon State University weed scientist, agreed the APHIS decision is a reasonable response, given the market concerns.

About 90 percent of the soft white wheat grown in Oregon and Washington and about 50 percent of Idaho's production are exported to Asia, where it is milled into flour for cakes, crackers and noodles.

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Our Walla Walla Store
WILL REOPEN SAT, DEC 19!

Due to the recent fire, our Walla Walla store has been temporarily closed. We are now in the process of putting the final touches on the store and are happy to announce that we will reopen tomorrow, Saturday, December 19 at 8am.

Thank you for your patience and support during this time. We apologize for any inconvenience and look forward to serving you soon.

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