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Idaho

Idaho drafts water sustainability plan

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

ST. ANTHONY, Idaho — A subcommittee of the Idaho Water Resource Board has completed a draft sustainability plan, offering guidance to preserve the state's water supply.

Pending approval by the full board in May, a public comment period encompassing seven statewide meetings on the plan will run through the third week of September.

The board will then contemplate revisions, based on the public's input, and the plan will be submitted for the state Legislature's approval in January 2017.

The draft is three pages long and will be added to the state water plan, establishing broad principles for leaders to consider in their water management policies and decisions.

"It sets an overall statewide vision for achieving sustainability of our water resources so we have ade-



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Jeff Raybould, a St. Anthony, Idaho, farmer who chairs the Idaho Water Resource Board subcommittee that created a draft sustainability plan to govern Idaho's water management, leads an April 12 tour of a canal passing through his farm dug specifically to facilitate managed aquifer recharge.

quate water supplies to meet existing and future water needs," said Water Board member Vince Alberdi.

In 2012 Idaho Gov. Butch Otter directed the board to create a sustainable water policy and highlighted the project during his most recent State of the State address.

Idaho Department of Water Resources senior water resource planner Neeley Miller drafted the plan with the board's input. Miller said the board also got ideas for the draft by meeting with companies and entities that have water sustainability plans, including the cities of Meridian and Hailey,

Idaho Power, Clear Springs Foods and J.R. Simplot Co.

The plan outlines implementation strategies such as inventorying Idaho's current and future water needs, studying water trends, identifying projects and management options that optimize water supplies without impairing quality, working to enhance surface water storage, maintaining funding for aquifer stabilization strategies and identifying water conservation measures for users. The document also identifies water milestones for the state to meet.

"It's a big step in the right direction for the State of Idaho to take to high-light sustainability practices that are in place and to set benchmarks to create a more sustainable, long-lasting water supply for current and future uses," said Jeff Raybould, a St. Anthony farmer who chairs the subcommittee assigned to draft the plan.

The policy will also help

guide how Idaho invests water sustainability funding approved during the recent legislative session, including \$5 million in annual cigarette tax dollars continuing through 2019, another \$5 million in annual general fund dollars starting in the next fiscal year and a \$2.5-million one-time payment.

IDWR Planning Division Chief Brian Patton said states throughout the West have been enacting sustainable water plans. Patton said the development of Idaho's plan was furthered by the recent water call settlement agreement between Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer groundwater users and senior irrigators with the Surface Water Coalition. The parties have agreed to take steps toward reversing the aquifer's declining levels.

"I do think we are a little unique in (Idaho) in that we are really on the verge of resolving some of these problems," Patton said.

Slow sales for re-introduced dry bean herbicide

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

HOMEDALE, Idaho — First-year sales of Eptam 20G, an herbicide that was returned to the market last year at the urging of Idaho's dry bean industry, were slower than anticipated.

Gowan Co. stopped manufacturing the product in 2008 for a variety of reasons, including reduced demand, but Idaho's dry bean industry persuaded the company to re-introduce it last year.

Gowan produced 400,000 pounds of the product, which company officials estimated to be about a two-year supply, and the company's distributors began selling it again last spring.

Gowan officials have said the market's response to the product will determine whether the company continues producing it.

While the company still has high hopes for Eptam 20G, "Our distributors ... are sitting on a lot of inventory and they are not particularly pleased with how the program turned out last year," said Ken Reh, Gowan's product manager for Eptam.

Some Idaho dry bean farmers say that Eptam 20G, which is the granular version of the herbicide, works better in controlling the hairy nightshade weed than Eptam 7E, the liquid version of the product.

Nightshade is the Idaho dry bean industry's top weed challenge and costs the industry about \$8 million a year, according to Idaho Bean Commission estimates based on grower surveys.

IBC board member Don Tolmie said Eptam 20G's residual effect is much longer and suppresses the weed later in the season than other products.

Eptam 7E has to be re-applied during the season, while Eptam 20G is applied once at planting, which reduces the need for an additional tractor trip through the field, said Tolmie, production manager of Treasure Valley Seed Co.

He estimates that Eptam 20G saves growers in areas with high nightshade pressure between \$60 and \$90 an acre, most of that in the reduced need for manual weed control.

Hairy nightshade is a prolific seed producer that emerges throughout the season. As little as two nightshade plants per meter of row can reduce bean yields by 13 percent, said University of Idaho researcher Mike Thornton.

S. Idaho Livestock Hall of Fame honors inductees

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — The Southern Idaho Livestock Hall of Fame celebrated its newest inductees at the organization's 57th annual banquet on Tuesday evening.

The honored inductees were cow-calf operators Jim and Nedra Korte of Buhl, cattle buyer and feeder Phil Munsee of Twin Falls, cattle producers and saleyard owners Bruce and Christine Billington of Twin Falls and ranchers Ted and Betty Ann Higley of Malta.

The Kortzes raise 270 cow-calf pairs on about 580 acres in a rotational grazing operation that utilizes five pastures, with two additional pastures for replacement heifers. Converting their cropland to pastures about 20 years ago and introducing sprinkler irrigation, they run a sustainable operation that utilizes the herd to both fertilize and harvest the forage.

Their forage production and grazing management, which minimize soil erosion and protects water quality, earned them the 2015 Grassman of the Year award by the Idaho Association of Conservation Districts.

Munsee parlayed his early start in the packing industry into a career in the cattle business and his own packing house and feedlots. His expertise in cattle slaughtering and eye for quality animals earned him a reputation as a knowledgeable buyer and established him



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Cattlemen and women pose for a photo following their induction into the Southern Idaho Livestock Hall of Fame Tuesday evening at the Turf Club in Twin Falls. From left are Ted and Betty Ann Higley, Phil and Pat Munsee, Jim and Nedra Korte and Bruce and Christine Billington.

as a valuable asset in Southern Idaho's packing and feeder industries.

His cattle-buying savvy continues to play an integral role in the 6,000 head feedlot he operates with his sons.

In addition to running their own cattle, the Billingtons have owned and operated the Twin Falls Livestock Commission Co. since the 1980s. They have built the business, with the help

of knowledgeable and loyal employees, on honesty and customer service.

The saleyard is one of the largest of its kind in the region, drawing about 175 buyers and consigners from much of Idaho, northern Nevada and northern Utah. Weekly sales handle up to 3,000 head of cattle in the busy season.

The Billingtons also accommodate the region with sheep, goat, swine and

horse sales and have been long-time supporters of FFA and 4-H.

The Higleys have been ranching in Southern Idaho since the early 1970s, and were one of the first operations in the area to raise Angus cattle. They grew their family operation over the years to include more farm ground, a backgrounding operation, a small feedlot and a custom hay business.

The Higleys were also

part owners of the Burley Livestock Auction for five years, and Ted has served as president of the Elba Cattle Association and the Farm Service Agency county committee and served on the Cassia County Fair Board for 18 years.

The Hall of Fame banquet was held at the Turf Club with about 170 people in attendance and included a special tribute to early inductees.

ISDA plans meeting on food safety rules

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — Idaho State Department of Agriculture officials will provide an overview of the new Food Safety Modernization Act rules and how they will

impact agriculture during an April 26 meeting.

FSMA "is widely considered the most sweeping change to food safety regulation since the 1940s and will have a direct impact on many Idaho growers, processors and shippers," according to an

ISDA press release.

The meeting will be held from 6-8 p.m. at the Clarion Inn in Ontario, Ore. The southwestern Idaho and Eastern Oregon farm industry is closely linked and many producers in this area farm in both states.

The meeting will focus on FSMA's produce rule and its preventive controls for human food rule.

The produce rule requires irrigation water to meet minimum standards for bacteria, a provision that is a big concern to onion farmers in this area.

The produce rule covers on-farm activities related to the growing of agricultural commodities that are consumed raw. The preventive controls for human food rule covers food manufacturing.

According to the ISDA news release, the meeting is targeted toward small and mid-sized farms and facilities.

For more information about the meeting, contact Candi Fitch, executive director of the Idaho Fruit and Vegetable Association, at (208) 722-5111.

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