

Farm Bureau busy ahead of presidential election

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

With the presidential election five months away, the American Farm Bureau Federation is busy doing its homework on Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

"We are definitely in the research stage of where the candidates stand on issues important to farmers and ranchers," said Dale Moore, Farm Bureau's executive director of public policy.

Farm Bureau officials will then relay the organization's position on those issues to both campaigns and hopefully be able to sit down with the candidates or their campaign staff to discuss the details and implications, he said.

"The general approach, particularly for Farm Bureau but also other organizations, is we firmly believe the country is run by those who show up ... we want to make sure the voices of our members are heard," he said.

Politicians often refer to agricultural states as "flyover country," but both campaigns need to understand agricultural issues are not just simply blue and red. They need to sit down with farmers and livestock producers and find out what's important to them and how policies affect them, Moore said.

"Farmers and ranchers by and large are engaged and tend to show up at elections," he said.

And past elections have proved that every vote really does count, he said.

Farm Bureau doesn't endorse candidates, but some of its state affiliates do, he said.

"And they're watching to

see if the candidates are going to commit to strengthening agriculture and rural America," he said.

Both candidates have made comments on the Trans-Pacific Partnership and trade in general — issues that are important to agriculture — so Farm Bureau has a good handle on where they stand in that area.

The organization is still analyzing the candidates' positions on several other issues to make sure both campaigns will know where Farm Bureau stands, he said.

Regulatory reform is one issue of great importance to ag producers. The government is constantly trying to expand its jurisdiction over farmers and ranchers, he said.

Farm Bureau is also focused on issues of food safety and food security. That covers a broad swath, but at the top of the current list is implementing the Food Safety Modernization Act. It's important to get that on-the-ground effort in place so an individual farmer knows what he's dealing with when an inspector shows up on his farm, he said.

Immigration reform is also a top priority, in particular getting legislation that ensures farmers and livestock producers have access to a legal workforce, he said.

GMO and other technology and innovations are another important issue.

There's a lot of pushback in that area, with an effort to kill farmers' and ranchers' ability to access those technologies, he said.

"There's too much at stake to take a back seat and watch this process," he said.

WSDA fines orchard company for pesticide drift

Two workers in adjoining orchard sickened

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

An orchard company has been fined \$1,800 for exposing two workers at a neighboring orchard to pesticides, causing both to seek medical treatment, according to the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

WSDA issued the fine June 15 against Wenatchee-based Double S Orchards for an incident May 5, 2015, about 6.5 miles east of Royal City in Grant County.

Two orchard employees, both licensed applicators, were applying pesticides with an air-blast sprayer on 19 acres of apples in the company's Galaxy Orchard.

A third orchard employee was in a pickup to warn the sprayers of traffic passing on an adjoining county road, according to WSDA.

The pesticides drifted across the road and contacted the two workers in the adjoining orchard, according to WSDA.

One worker was exposed as he was waving and yelling, trying to get the applica-

tors' attention that the pesticide was drifting across the road.

The other worker was about 160 feet away and turned, but still felt a fine mist on his face, according to WSDA.

Both suffered mild pesticide-related illnesses, according to WSDA.

A WSDA investigation confirmed pesticides contacted the workers' clothing. The wind speed was 6 to 8 mph, with gusts up to 13 mph, according to weather records examined by WSDA.

The company reported the incident.

WSDA held the company responsible. Two orchard managers and a foreman had approved the spraying, according to WSDA.

Efforts to reach the company for comment were not successful.

In setting the fine, WSDA doubled the penalty for a first-time violation because two people were exposed.

The company waived a hearing and did not contest the allegations, according to WSDA.

WSDA has levied six fines in 2016 for pesticide violations.

The penalty against Double S Orchard is the largest issued this year to an agricultural business.

Easements help keep land in farming

By **KATY NESBITT**
For the Capital Press

ENTERPRISE, Ore. — When making decisions about the future of the family farm worries about taxes and values loom large. Nonprofits and agencies throughout the Northwest, such as the Wallowa Land Trust, work with landowners to find ways to reduce income taxes while planning a lasting legacy.

Julia Lakes, the trust's conservation director, told attendees at a May workshop in Enterprise that conservation easements are one way they can help landowners keep property in the family during estate planning.

"The land trust uses its experience to 'ballpark' what you want the end result to be and helps lay out the path before a lot of money is expended," Lakes said.

Attorney Nancy Duhnkrack kicked off the workshop with an overview of how easements work.

"Conservation easements allow landowners to voluntarily restrict how land is used in the future to protect the property's values," Duhnkrack said.

She said conservation easements are becoming increasingly popular, not just to keep working farmland intact, but because tax incentives, recently made permanent by Congress, make them economically advantageous.

"The landowner still owns the property and retains the right to sell it, lease it, pass it



Katy Nesbitt/For the Capital Press

The confluence of the Wallowa and Lostine rivers was protected from development through a conservation easement agreement between the Wallowa Land Trust and the Woody Wolfe Ranch.

on," Duhnkrack said. "It is the job of the land trust or public agency to monitor and make sure the restrictions in the easement continue to be in place."

Wallowa County's economy is dependent on natural resources, primarily through agriculture, timber harvest and tourism. Tourism alone brought in \$28 million in 2015, according to a Dean Runyan and Associates study. The stunning scenery attracts short-time visitors and the development of vacation homes that can cause farmland fragmentation and put the rural flavor of the county at risk.

The fear of losing farmland to development prompted the trust's formation in 2004. Its signature bumper sticker, "Keep it Rural!", simply states its mission.

Woody Wolfe, a sixth-gen-

eration Wallowa County farmer, was the first to use the trust to create a 197-acre easement on his farm. Wolfe said his first easement has two zones; one is working farmland and the other is a riparian zone where cattle once grazed.

"In the ag zone I gave up the right to build except for agricultural structures, but the riparian restrictions are much greater," Wolfe said.

Duhnkrack said the rights a landowner gives up and what he retains are entirely up to him.

Wolfe said soon after he purchased a tract of land from a neighbor he started talking to James Monteith, one of the founding board members of the trust, about entering into an easement agreement to help pay off the loan.

"The highest and best use

is not running cows or growing crops, it's what somebody out of the area is willing to pay for breathing the air, having no traffic and looking at the mountains," Wolfe said.

In 2011, Lakes said, the trust paid Wolfe 70 percent of the easement's value with grant money and the family donated the remainder.

For the second easement on 257 acres, Wolfe is taking advantage of a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service grant that pays 50 percent of the land's value. Lakes said the NRCS allows the landowner to donate up to 25 percent and the other 25 percent is coming from private foundations and the Nez Perce Tribe.

Director Kathleen Ackley said the second easement is an attractive project for the trust because it is adjacent to the first — creating a larger protected swath of land.

"It's about landscape-scale connectivity," Lakes said. "Protecting big chunks keep agriculture viable."

Wolfe said not everyone understands the benefit of conservation easements.

"There is a little bit of value to neighbors when you don't change the land as much as you could have," Wolfe said. "As a neighbor may not agree with using a conservation easement, but you might rest at ease when there is less likelihood there will be something across your fence line that detracts from your serenity."

Smithsonian water exhibit traveling through Idaho

By **JOHN O'CONNELL**
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS — Idaho Humanities Council Director Rick Arding believes the latest Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibit to grace the state is especially timely, given the Legislature's recent commitments to maintaining a stable water supply.

The free exhibit, which opened May 28 at the Idaho Falls Public Library, where it will remain until July 10, offers a multi-faceted look into the importance of water. Displays arrived at the library in 20 large crates and cover topics such as water's spiritual, social and cultural significance, ocean life, harnessing water's power to make energy, how water shapes the landscape, how modern agriculture puts water to use and the importance of protecting the critical, finite resource.

The exhibit will be displayed in six Idaho cities, moving to the Sun Valley Museum of History in Ketchum from July 16 through Aug. 28, to the Idaho Museum of Natural History in Pocatello from Sept. 3 through Oct. 16, to the Nampa Public Library from Oct. 22 through Dec. 4, to the Latah County Historical Society in Moscow from Dec. 10 through Jan. 22 and to the Burley Public Library from Jan. 28 through March 12.

The Idaho Legislature recently committed several million dollars toward efforts to reverse declining groundwater levels, and the state is in the midst of developing a sustainability plan to govern its water decisions.



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Cait Stewart watches her 6-year-old son, Constantine, as he checks the answer on a display June 9 about the amount of water required to produce various commodities. The display is part of a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibit now at the Idaho Falls Public Library focused on the importance of water.

Ardinger believes the exhibit will help visitors develop "informed opinions about where their water comes from and what use it should be put to."

Ardinger said the council, a nonprofit organization supported by donations and an annual grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, books a traveling exhibit through the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street program nearly every year. The council will spend roughly \$50,000 for the rights to the exhibit, and to ship it to each city.

"We're one of the first states to get this exhibit on water," Arding said.

According to water trivia included in the display, it takes nearly 1,800 gallons of water to produce a pound of beef. Furthermore, a 2010 survey found more than 40 percent of fresh

water in the U.S. was used for thermoelectric generation, mostly driving steam-powered turbines for creating electricity. Another 38 percent of fresh water withdrawals were used for irrigation. And fresh water comprises just 3 percent of the 327 quintillion gallons of water on the Earth.

The display also offers quotations from deep thinkers, such as President John F. Kennedy's belief, "Anyone who can solve the problems of water will be worthy of two Nobel prizes — one for peace and one for science."

Speakers will be invited to each location to discuss a water-related topic in conjunction with the exhibit. Rexburg water rights attorney Jerry Rigby is among the scheduled speakers at the Idaho Falls Public Library.

Rigby said he will speak June 29. He said he'll discuss the monumental Snake River Adjudication process, which was the nation's largest effort to catalog water rights, as well as "the significant rulings of the courts through the 27-plus years of the SRBA, which guided decisions and eventual decrees resulting from the SRBA."

Each Idaho exhibitor will provide local water-related content, such as water's role in the formation of the state and the history of its canal systems.

Idaho Falls has included newspaper clippings on the 40th anniversary of the breaching of the Teton Dam.

Library official Liza Evans said one exhibit visitor recognized her father, rancher L.W. Ball, in a photograph from the Teton Dam clippings.

Littau Harvester expanding production capabilities

By **JANAE SARGENT**
Capital Press

STAYTON, Ore. — Littau Harvester is expanding its production capabilities and preparing for an expected growth spurt by moving its assembly operation to a large warehouse it recently purchased several blocks from its main production facility.

Frank Brown, production and purchasing manager, said the addition of the new site will free up the main facility to focus on building modular components and will open the company up to the opportunity to produce and sell significantly more harvesting equipment to more customers.

Littau purchased the



Janae Sargent/Capital Press

Littau Harvester bought a manufacturing facility in Stayton, Ore., once used to assemble modular homes.

150,000-square-foot warehouse on Wilco Road in January. The warehouse was formerly a modular home production facility and sits on 10 acres.

Brown said he hopes the expansion will allow Littau to continue to innovate at a higher level and come up with machines that will offset to the upcoming labor

shortage for farmers.

"We see another major hurdle for the farmers coming with some of the new laws that are in place," Brown said. "Ten years ago, machines were just for clean up after crops had been picked. Now you have farmers who are picking 100 percent of their berries with a machine."

Brown said Littau is working with individual customers on a prototype basis to develop machines that will meet their needs given recent labor shortages.

Littau builds approximately 60 harvesting machines a year. Brown said when assembly shared the same space as all the other departments, pro-

duction was cramped and he had to turn away customers because the company did not have the space or manpower to take on more projects.

Brown said the assembly facility is still early in its development and is currently more of a crude assembly line. He would like to see it become the storage facility with racks and parts staged to be convenient as well as the firm's new trucking facility.

This most recent facility is not the first big step toward expansion Littau has made since it was founded in Eugene Littau's garage 50 years ago.

Littau bought his first industrial facility after his neighbors suggested he move the

harvesting equipment he lined up down the street to a separate location. Since then, Brown said the company has experienced continuous growth and moved to and purchased several pieces of property as it has expanded.

In 2000, Littau sold the company to one of his employees, Norman Johnson, who had been working there since 1987.

Since buying Littau, Johnson has purchased three buildings.

"Norman has an exceptional vision of where the company needs to go to stay ahead," Brown said. "Whatever it takes to keep ahead of the competition."