

Oregon cheesemakers place in competition

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Five Oregon cheesemakers won awards in the recent American Cheese Society's annual competition, held in Des Moines, Iowa.

Rogue Creamery, of Central Point, won six awards. The creamery took second place for its Flora Nelle Organic and third for its Caveman Blue and

third for its Tolman Organic in the category of blue-veined cheeses with a rind; second for Echo Mountain Blue Cheese in the rindless/goat's milk category; third for two-year-old Organic Cheddar; and third for Smokey TouVelle in the smoked cheese open category.

Ancient Heritage Dairy, of Portland, won first place for Hannah in the "American Originals" category.

Ochoa Queseria, based in Albany,

won first place for its Queso Oaxaca in the Hispanic- and Portuguese-style melting cheeses.

Oregon State University Creamery, in Corvallis, won third place for its Smoked Cheddar.

Tillamook County Creamery Association, of Tillamook, won second place for its hot habanero Monterey Jack; second place for its white sharp cheddar aged two years or less; third

place for its extra sharp cheddar aged two to four years; and third place for its salted sweet cream butter.

Contest results were announced July 29. The contest is the nation's largest cheese competition. Entries are judged on flavor, aroma, texture and technical accomplishments. The contest this year attracted 1,843 entries from 260 processors in North and South America.

Ad encourages Oregonians to oppose monument plan

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

JORDAN VALLEY, Ore. — A TV ad aired on MSNBC in the Portland region during the Democratic national convention encouraged people to oppose a proposed national monument in Malheur County.

The ad was paid for by the Owyhee Basin Stewardship Coalition, which was formed by a group of ranchers and other Malheur County residents this year to oppose a proposed national monument on 2.5 million acres in an area of the county known as the Owyhee Canyonlands.

That represents 40 percent of the county's total land, and opponents worry it would restrict grazing and other economic opportunities.

Rancher and coalition member Mark Mackenzie said the majority of Eastern Oregon residents are aware of the proposal and oppose it, and the coalition is trying to ensure people in the rest of the state know about it.

The coalition has also had "No Monument" billboard signs along the Interstate 5 corridor for about six weeks, he said.

"We're trying to broaden the coalition base to get people in Portland and the Willamette



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

A sign displays local sentiment in the Jordan Valley opposing the proposed Owyhee Canyonlands National Monument in Malheur County, Ore. Opponents ran TV ads against the proposal during the Democratic national convention.

Valley to stand up and say, 'No,'" he said.

"We're trying to spread the message to folks who may not even know what's going on in our part of the state," said rancher and coalition member Elias Eiguren.

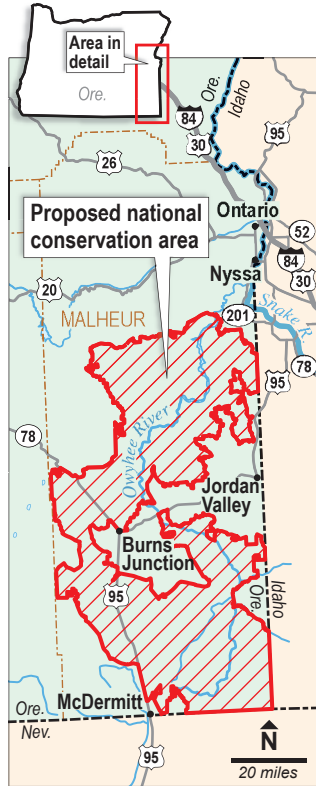
The ad asks Oregonians to let Gov. Kate Brown and U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, all Democrats, know they are opposed to a monument designation without a vote of Congress.

The proposed monument designation is being pushed by the Oregon Natural Desert Association, an environmental

group based in Bend, and Portland's Keen Footwear.

Supporters say they're not trying to eliminate grazing, but instead want to prevent mining, transmission lines and oil and gas development. They tout a poll they commissioned that showed 70 percent of Oregon residents supported permanent protections for the Owyhee Canyonlands, including 66 percent in Oregon's 2nd Congressional District where the national monument would be located.

Opponents believe monument supporters will ask the Obama administration to use



Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

the Antiquities Act to create the national monument. They oppose a monument designation through executive order.

Monument opponents respond with their own poll results, which show 73 percent of Oregonians believe that national monument designations should be approved by Congress rather than the president.

In a news release. OBSC Chairman Steve Russell, a rancher, said Eastern Oregon families "are searching for a leader in the Democratic party who will stand up for rural Oregon. We face strong opposition from well-funded special interests and Portland-based corporations, and our community needs a champion."

Mackenzie said the message of not designating a national monument without local input and a vote of Congress is one that resonates across party lines and the coalition believes it will enlist more support as that message reaches a larger audience.

"I don't view this as a Democrat or Republican thing," he said. "This is about the health of the land and not about any political party."

Formed in March, the coalition has raised \$370,000, most of it from Malheur County, Mackenzie said.

OBSC now includes more than 6,000 members, a dozen organizations and more than three dozen elected leaders from across Oregon, according to the news release.

"We formed this coalition to have a voice in the process," Mackenzie said. "This has unified the county and the people here."

Final Idaho burn proposal could face challenge

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho farm groups support a final proposal by state regulators to change Idaho's crop residue burning program. Environmental groups, not so much.

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality officials say the changes are necessary to avoid a large reduction in the number of allowable burn days for farmers.

People representing farm groups and environmental and public health advocates have been meeting for several months in an attempt to reach an agreement on the proposed changes.

Bluegrass farmer Justin McLeod, president of the Nezperce Prairie Grass Growers Association, said his group is pleased with DEQ's final proposal, which is subject to legislative approval.

"We feel like the health concerns are being addressed and we also get to continue our burn program," he said. "We'll support DEQ and help move (the proposal) forward."

DEQ can only approve a burn request if ozone and small particulate matter levels aren't expected to exceed 75 percent of the national standard for those air pollutants.

Because EPA tightened the federal ozone standard in October, the number of allowable burn days in some parts of Idaho would be reduced by one-third to one-half, according to DEQ estimates.

To avoid that scenario, DEQ has proposed loosening Idaho's ozone standard to 90 percent of the federal standard. Environmental groups said they would agree to that as long as there was an equitable tightening of Idaho's small particulate matter, or PM 2.5, standard.

DEQ's final proposal does not change the current PM 2.5 standard.

An official who represents Safe Air For Everyone, whose 2007 lawsuit resulted in field burning being temporarily stopped in Idaho, said the group would challenge any proposal that does not also tighten the PM 2.5 standard.

SAFE and other environmental groups believe a tightening of the PM 2.5 standard is necessary to offset any potential health impacts from the changing of the ozone standard.

But DEQ officials said there is no scientific evidence that shows tightening the PM 2.5 standard would protect public health any more than the current standard. It could reduce the number of burn days, however.

Smoke from field burning doesn't increase ozone concentrations in the same manner that it does PM 2.5 levels, said Mary Anderson, who manages DEQ's crop residue burning program.

She said what really protects the public from smoke impacts are the rest of the program's requirements, which include factoring in meteorological conditions, moisture content and burn characteristics of the material to be burned, and lower triggers for burns occurring near sensitive populations.

"It's the whole program that really protects the public from smoke impacts ... and that's not being changed at all," she said.

DEQ's decision not to change the PM 2.5 standard was supported by farm groups.

"No best available science has been presented to warrant a reduction in PM 2.5," Idaho-Eastern Oregon Seed Association Executive Director Roger Batt said in comments submitted to DEQ. "The EPA has not tightened the PM 2.5 standards. These standards should not be on the table."

Drought, markets prompt declines in California navel, Valencia acreage

By TIM HEARDEN
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Drought and market forces have led to declines in acreage for California navel and Valencia oranges, though some other citrus varieties are gaining ground.

Overall navel acreage saw a net drop from 130,000 to 129,000 between the 2013-14 and 2014-15 seasons, and Valencia orange acreage declined from 36,000 to 34,000 during the same period, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

However, lemon acreage gained slightly, from 46,000 to 47,000, and mandarins and their hybrids saw a significant increase, from 46,000 acres to 52,000, according to the agency's 2016 California Citrus Acreage Report. The declines continue a trend for both varieties, according to California Citrus Mutual.

There's no question that



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

An excavator takes out orange trees near Orange Cove, Calif., to be chipped into biomass in April 2015. Navel and Valencia orange acreage in California showed net declines from 2014 to 2015, according to a National Agricultural Statistics Service report.

drought has played a key role, said Chris Stambach, director of industry relations for California Citrus Mutual. A shutoff of federal surface water to the state's prime citrus-growing region in the eastern San Joaquin Valley in 2014 and 2015

prompted some growers to bulldoze orchards, and some haven't been replanted.

"They didn't have good groundwater and they got cut off" from their surface water supply, Stambach said. "They didn't have a choice."

But market forces have also caused some growers to switch

varieties, he said. For instance, smaller navels that were diverted to the domestic market were undercut by newer varieties such as Tango mandarins and Murcott oranges, which are easier to peel, he said.

As the newer varieties become more popular, they put a squeeze on the domestic utilization rates of navels, which affects returns per grower, Stambach said.

"I think the thing that's going to drive acreage is going to be price," he said.

Navels have been the standard-bearer among citrus fruit in recent years, and orchards taken out of production in the last two years have been partially offset by recent plantings in other areas that were just coming online.

Navel oranges have been the standard bearer among citrus fruit in recent years. But Citrus Mutual, a trade association with more than 2,000 members, estimates that navel acreage in 2016 is down to 120,783 acres

statewide, continuing a steady decline from 134,906 acres in 2010.

In the top county for navels, Tulare County, acreage has dropped from 72,197 to 67,892 during that period, according to the organization. Navel acreage is down in every county in which the fruit is grown.

Valencia acreage has taken a similar nosedive, from 42,540 statewide in 2010 to 29,906 this summer, according to Citrus Mutual. In Tulare County, the leading county for Valencias, acreage of the variety is down to 12,763 from 17,061 in 2010, the association observes.

But mandarin acreage has ballooned from 38,826 to 58,941 statewide during the six-year period. In Tulare County, mandarin acreage has more than doubled — from 9,813 in 2010 to 20,565 now, according to Citrus Mutual. Fresno County mandarin ground has grown from 14,762 acres to 20,251 during the period, according to the organization.

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