

# Growers report good yields, quality as melon harvests proceed

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Growers are in the peak of what they say is a plentiful harvest of cantaloupes, watermelons and other summer melons in California’s San Joaquin Valley.

Farmers say they’re seeing excellent quality as they’re harvesting record or near-record tonnage of melons from their fields, the California Farm Bureau Federation reported.

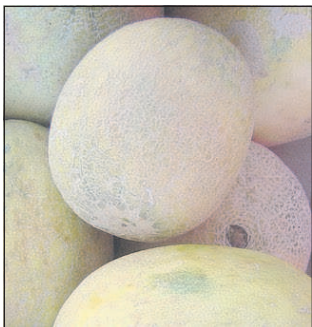
The harvest of mini-watermelons has slowed in the last few weeks, although growers may do

another pass through their fields depending on set and price, the National Agricultural Statistics Service reported.

But other watermelons, honeydew melons and cantaloupes are still being packed and shipped as well as sold at local stands and farmers’ markets, according to NASS.

Harvesting crews will move through a melon field several times during the course of a summer to find melons that have reached the desired quality, the Farm Bureau explains.

California leads the nation in production of cantaloupes and honeydew



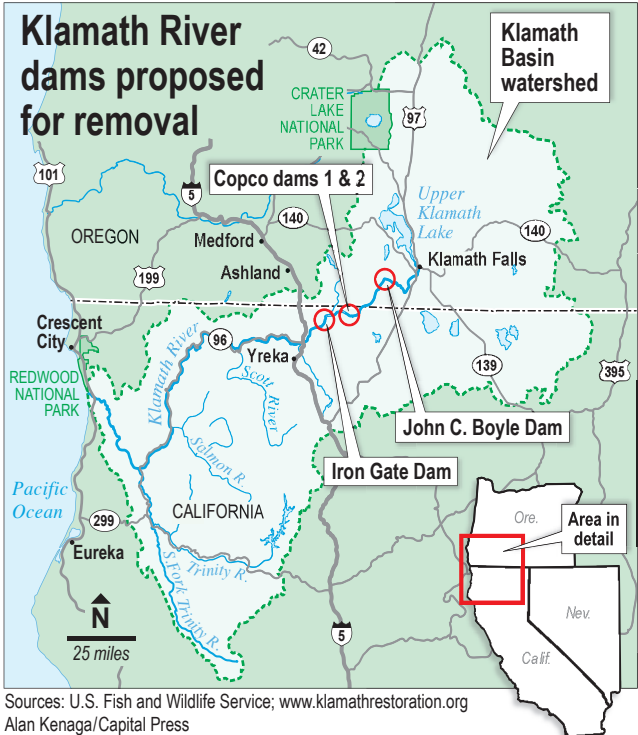
Tim Hearden/Capital Press  
Cantaloupes fill a bin at farmers’ market in Redding, Calif. Melon harvest is at its peak in California’s San Joaquin Valley.

melons and ranks third in watermelon production, according to the CFBF.

Among other summer

crops, according to the NASS office in Sacramento:

- Zucchini, Italian squash, Bell peppers, sweet corn, eggplant, cucumbers, broccoli and carrots are in the midst of their harvest in the Central Valley, while green peas and fava beans are among the crops being harvested in the San Francisco Bay area.
- Fresh-market tomatoes are nearing their harvest as a hot spell in late July sped their ripening, while the processing tomato harvest continues with excellent yields in both conventional and organic orchards.



## Klamath parties keep up pressure as dam removal proceeds

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. — Both sides in the debate over removing four dams from the Klamath River are keeping the pressure on as the project moves forward.

The Hoopa Valley Tribe is suing federal agencies to improve flows in the lower Klamath River for endangered coho salmon — a goal that proponents say could be achieved if the dams came out.

Tribal chairman Ryan Jackson said disease rates in juvenile salmon in the past two years have soared well beyond limits established in a 2013 biological opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service, and that even those limits don’t meet standards set in tribal trusts.

“It’s not so much to do with dam removal per se, although certainly that’s a part of it,” Jackson said of the tribe’s goals behind the lawsuit. “The lawsuit really gets down to the protection of the fishery and the needs for increased flows and enhanced water quality.”

The lawsuit follows the Karuk Tribe’s filing in late June of a 60-day notice of intent to sue the NMFS and Bureau of Reclamation over alleged violations of the Endangered Species Act. The tribe cites a disease infection rate of 90 percent of sampled juvenile salmon in 2015.

from owner PacifiCorp, will likely file for removal with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission before the end of August, said Nancy Vogel, a California Natural Resources Agency spokeswoman.

Top state and federal officials signed an agreement in April to have the nonprofit organization go through FERC to remove the dams after legislation authorizing their removal failed to make it through Congress by the end of 2015. Proponents are still seeking federal legislation that would provide money to operate two diversion dams within the basin that PacifiCorp would turn over to Reclamation so irrigators wouldn’t have to pick up the cost.

Political opposition to dam removal remains vocal in the basin, including from Lawrence Kogan, a former Klamath Irrigation District attorney who’s now working through his own nonprofit advocacy organization to raise questions about the project.

The KID’s newly elected majority hired Kogan earlier this year to scrutinize the dam-removal process but cut ties with him in mid-July when some board members thought the New York-based attorney had overstepped his contract, the Klamath Falls Herald and News reported. Acting district manager Darin Kandra did not return calls from the Capital Press seeking comment.

Kogan has since sent public-records requests to the Bureau of Reclamation and five state agencies seeking the details of behind-the-scenes discussions of the amended dam-removal and water-sharing agreements, including how needed irrigation canal improvements would be funded.

“These are things that are public information,” said Kogan, adding that “half of the basin doesn’t know what’s going on and has been kept in the dark” because of non-disclosure agreements among the agencies.

Ed Sheets, who facilitates a committee implementing the Klamath agreements, said all of the bargained-for benefits in the pacts “were clearly spelled out” for those in the basin that would be affected.

“On a larger scale, there’s been some conversations between the tribes and irrigators to see if some of the things (in the original Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement) can be put back together,” Sheets said. “That’s going to be a complicated process.”

## Farmer and his family growing Royal produce

By **DAN WHEAT**  
Capital Press

ROYAL CITY, Wash. — Santos Guadarrama admitted he should have started picking cantaloupe earlier than 7 a.m.

The day would peak at 99 degrees and it was already in the mid-80s at 9 a.m. as his family helped him load the melons into a bin in the back of his pickup.

“I usually try to get things done before it gets hot but it’s not going to happen today (July 25),” said Guadarrama, 46, as he drove the pickup into the field.

He pitched 7- to 9-pound melons to his son, Benjamin, 11, at the bin in back of the pickup while his wife, Zenaida, 44, drove and Emily, 4, rode along.

The melons went to a cooler before being trucked 66 miles to the family’s Royal Produce outlet at Pybus Market in Wenatchee. They also sell at the Wenatchee Farmers’ Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays and at the Moses Lake Farmers’ Market on Saturdays.

Guadarrama began working at Ike and Alice Parker’s farm a few miles north of Royal City in 1990. In 1997, he inherited their produce business, bought a small portion of their land and continued growing vegetables. He grows on about 8 acres.

It’s been a family affair. His wife, their seven children and at times his brothers and their families have helped.

“We thought of using our name but it’s hard for people to say it and write it. Folks called us the people from Royal, so we decided to call



Dan Wheat/Capital Press  
Santos Guadarrama shows a cabbage that does well in heat. He grows many different vegetables.

our business Royal Produce,” he said.

The season starts in February when they germinate seeds in a greenhouse. Later, he moves the young plants into the field, covering the more vulnerable ones with Agribon, a light, porous fabric to protect them from frost, wind, hail and rain.

Cantaloupe, watermelon, cucumber, squash and tomatoes make up more than half the production. But there’s also basil, peppers, parsley,

onions, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, okra, beets and green beans.

This year, they began using composted, pelletized manure, yard compost and organic liquid fertilizer as they transition to organic production.

Guadarrama once also worked construction but for some time has focused solely on the farm.

“It’s not lucrative in any way, but it pays the bills. It fits our family. There’s freedom,

which is the thing I value the most,” he said.

He’s his own boss and can chart his own course.

The Guadarramas grew up in Villa Guerrero, a small village south of Mexico City. His father grew and sold vegetables.

“When I was a little kid, I helped him and I hated it,” Guadarrama said.

He learned about flowers because the people in Villa Guerrero who made more money, including Zenaida’s parents, raised and sold flowers.

Guadarrama managed a couple of greenhouses of roses for a company but decided it wouldn’t be enough to support a family.

He and Zenaida crossed the U.S.-Mexican border illegally in 1989. He worked in construction in California and then at an orchard near Royal City before hiring on at the Parkers’.

Their children were all born in the U.S. and therefore are U.S. citizens. The Guadarramas were able to pay a fine and become legal, permanent residents when their oldest child, who now works in nursing in Portland, reached 21 years of age, five years ago.

They are working toward U.S. citizenship.

Guadarrama says today he might not cross the border illegally but that back then conditions were different and he was seeking the best for his family.

It’s human nature to seek the best for one’s family, he said. Besides the fine, they paid another price, not being able to visit their parents in Mexico for 22 years.

## Container-grown hazelnut trees provide head start

### Ron and Daniel Chapin looking to save time replacing orchards

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Press

The hazelnut trees in Ron and Daniel Chapin’s older orchards have remained remarkably productive despite the fact they’re dying.

As eastern filbert blight kills many of their trees, the father and son still hope to get as many hazelnuts from them as possible.

At the same time, they want to get a head start replacing the orchards with new varieties that are resistant to the fungal pathogen.

Their solution is to begin growing young hazelnut trees for two years in 15-gallon containers in preparation for transplanting.

That way, the Chapins won’t have to wait as long for the replacement orchards to begin yielding enough nuts to harvest, which usually occurs in the fifth year, Ron Chapin said. “It gets us to production quicker.”

The strategy also makes sense for fields currently producing other crops, he said. “The biggest thing is the extra two years you’ve got to do whatever with the ground.”

Aside from time savings, the containerized hazelnuts provide an agronomic advantage, said Nik Wiman, orchard crops extension specialist for Oregon State University.

Currently, many yearling hazelnut trees are being planted across Oregon even though they probably should have been culled, said Wiman.

Demand is so high for young hazelnut trees that growers are willing to settle for lower-quality specimens, he said.

“We’re limited by plant material, essentially,” Wiman said.

Trees that have spent a couple years in a container have a more developed root structure and should perform better, he said. “That’s what we really need when transplanting the tree.”

Of course, planting larger trees grown with this system does have a downside — handling 45-pound containers is more difficult than yearling “whips” that can be carried around in a sack.

“Logistics is going to be the challenge for us,” said Daniel Chapin.

The bigger, heavier containers take roughly twice as much time to plant and require preparing holes with a tractor-mounted auger. Transportation is another issue — it would take a semi-trailer to haul the 300 trees needed to plant about two acres.

Even so, the Chapins are optimistic about their strategy because fewer than 1 percent of the container-grown Jefferson trees they plant end up dying, compared to roughly 3 percent of the variety that die when planted as whips.

# Lawsuit accused environmental group of discrimination

## Case against Western Watersheds Project dismissed by ex-employee

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Press

An environmental group opposed to public lands grazing was accused of age discrimination by a former employee who has since dismissed the lawsuit.

The lawsuit was filed against the Western Watersheds Project, which has

fought multiple legal fights over grazing, by Mary K. Fite, the nonprofit group’s former biodiversity director.

She voluntarily dismissed the case without prejudice, allowing it to be revived, within a day after filing it.

Capital Press was unable to reach an attorney for Fite as of press time and Western

Watersheds Project is not commenting on the lawsuit.

Fite alleged that she was fired in violation of federal and state anti-discrimination laws by the environmental group in early 2015 at the age of 60 after previously being demoted and having her pay reduced.

The complaint claimed that Fite’s problems be-

gan after the Western Watersheds Project, which is headquartered in Hailey, Idaho, hired Travis Bruner as executive director in 2014. The group’s previous chief, Jon Marvel, had retired the previous year.

Fite alleged that one of the group’s directors told another employee they were seeking to “make the organi-

zation younger” and that at least three employees over 50 years old were terminated under Bruner.

Bruner also said that Western Watersheds Project must become “more lean and nimble” in its battles with federal agencies, the complaint said.

The lawsuit cites an email from Bruner as stating, “Much like a predator-prey relationship, where WWP is predator and government agencies prey, the government has

adapted to hide and defend against some of our routine approaches.”

Western Watersheds Project received nearly \$700,000 in revenue, with about \$140,000 derived from recovered legal fees, in 2014, the most recent year its federal tax-exempt filing is publicly available.

However, the group’s expenses surpassed its income, resulting in a \$250,000 net deficit that year.