

County cancels meeting on bid to reclassify farmland

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Oregon's Clackamas County canceled a meeting this week on its bid to redesignate farmland following critical remarks from communities, a conservation district and a key state land-use agency.

That doesn't mean the idea is dead, however. A majority of county commissioners want to review the status of

1,625 acres now designated "rural reserves." The land, three parcels south and southeast of Portland, was designated to remain farmland for 50 years under a 2010 agreement signed by Clackamas, Washington and Multnomah counties and Metro, the Portland area's land-use planning agency.

The Clackamas commissioners now want to review that decision. They believe their county needs more "em-

ployment land" that can be developed for industrial or commercial use and jobs. This summer, they announced a plan to review the status of 800 acres south of Wilsonville, 400 acres adjacent to the urban growth boundary of the city of Canby; and 425 acres south of the Clackamas River along Springwater Road. County officials believe the land should revert to "undesigned" rather than rural reserves.

The proposal caught the

attention of groups such of Friends of French Prairie, which opposes development spilling over from the Portland area into the northern Willamette Valley.

The Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District, which usually steers clear of political arguments, took the unusual step of expressing its concern in a letter to the commissioners. The district's board said the county's plan "may not adequately con-

sider the long-term value of high-value farmland," which it called an "irreplaceable natural resource."

Officials in Wilsonville and Canby, which might have to provide services such as water, sewer and police and fire protection to new development, said their cities have already designated other areas for development, and don't favor adding land that is outside their city limits and urban growth boundaries.

Meanwhile, the state Department of Land Conservation and Development said the county's intended review goes beyond the narrow issues detailed in a court-ordered remand of the rural reserves issue.

In a letter to the county, regional representative Jennifer Donnelly said DLCD "encourages the county to maintain the rural designations of the three study areas and focus on completing the reserves process."



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Sugar beets grow in Blackfoot, Idaho. Growers are anticipating a record beet yield with the potential for high sugar content.

Idaho growers expect record beet yield, high-quality spuds

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

Idaho growers anticipate digging another record-yielding sugar beet crop and potatoes with excellent quality, thanks to ideal weather during the critical points of this growing season.

Rupert grower Duane Grant, chairman of the board at Snake River Sugar Co., said a "phenomenal" beet crop has matured about 10 days ahead of normal, and the company expects a "third year in a row of steadily increasing, record yields."

Grant said beets have begun turning yellow, suggesting plants have exhausted nitrogen and are shifting from vegetative growth to sugar accumulation. Grant said early beet harvest will begin during the first week of September — earlier than many years — and new equipment at the Mini-Cassia processing plant will "help push the tons through more efficiently."

Idaho Sugarbeet Growers Association Executive Director Mark Duffin said growers reported good emergence, strong stands, virtually no replants and plenty of heat throughout the growing region — a formula for an excellent crop.

"I think the beet crop could be very, very good yield-wise," said Hazelton grower Randy Grant, adding now through Oct. 1 is the critical period for sugar formation.

Aberdeen grower Andy Povey has noticed beets have been using a lot of water, evidencing rapid growth. Having a thick stand also bodes well for sugar, he explained. Thick stands consume nitrogen quickly, triggering sugar accumulation, and yield a large number of small beets, which tend to have a better sugar percentage. Recent cooler nights should also boost sugar formation, Povey said.

Randy Grant, a Russet Burbank grower for the processed potato industry, said spuds benefited from plenty of warm weather without extreme temperature fluctuations during key growth periods.

"The quality is there. We don't see the rough potatoes, the growth cracks and that type of stuff," he said. "It was ideal growing weather when they started making their shape."

Only recently has he noticed spud fields beginning to "show their age," following a 10-day stretch of extreme high temperatures to end July and begin August. He said the recent heat stress shouldn't affect quality, and bulking should resume when temperatures dip back to normal.

Duane Grant has also noticed potato fields are now "looking older," but he believes the quality of the crop was protected when foliage grew to cover rows, providing shade, before the onset of hotter weather.

Aberdeen grower Dirk Driscoll believes the recent hot spell could affect yields.

"It may not size up as well because of the aging of the plants due to hotter weather, but for the most part, we have a good quality crop at this point," Driscoll said.

American Falls grower Jim Tiede said a lack of summer showers has nullified concerns about potential late blight pressure, thus far, and growers in his region haven't been overwhelmed by large numbers of potato psyllids, which spread zebra chip disease in spuds.

In his test digs, Idaho Falls grower Derek Reed has seen "big spuds for this time of year."

"I'm expecting a little bit better (potato) yield than last year, but not a record yield by any means," Reed said.

Stinkbugs' natural predator has arrived in the Pacific Northwest

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Discovering the Portland presence of a wasp that kills the eggs of the dreaded brown marmorated stinkbug might be cause for more head scratching than fist bumps, but researchers will take good breaks where they find them.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture announced that one of its entomologists discovered a cluster of stinkbug eggs in Portland that had been obliterated by a tiny, parasitic wasp called *Trissolcus japonicus*. The finding may speed up control of brown marmorated stinkbug.

Like the stinkbug, referred to as BMSB, the wasp isn't native to Oregon. The female wasp lays its eggs inside the eggs of stinkbugs. The developing wasp larvae essentially eat their way out as they grow, destroying the host.

That trait caught the eye of researchers at ODA, Oregon State University and elsewhere, because BMSB will eat nearly anything and are considered a major threat to fruit, berry, vegetable and nut crops. Its discovery in southeast Portland's venerable Ladd's Addition neighborhood in 2004 touched off a program, funded by the USDA's Agricultural Research Service, to find a method of biocontrol, as bug-on-bug predation is called.

The state ag department leases space at OSU, which cooperates in the research, to raise the wasps in quarantine and sic them on BMSB in the laboratory.

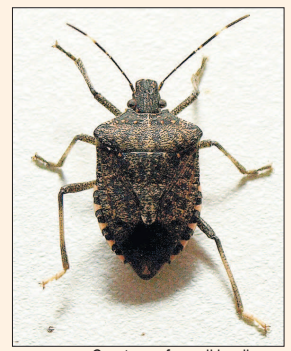
One of the key questions is whether the wasps might harm beneficial native bugs as well. Entomologists have been working on it since 2011; the idea is to gather enough data to petition USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service for permission to release the pred-



Courtesy of Oregon Department of Ag

A tiny parasitic wasp of the type recently discovered in Portland emerges from the egg of a brown marmorated stinkbug, which can cause heavy crop damage.

Brown marmorated stink bug



Courtesy of en.wikipedia.org

Binomial name: *Halyomorpha halys*
Appearance: Shield shaped and dark, mottled brown
Diet: Primarily tree fruits
Life cycle: One or two generations in cooler climates; up to five in warmer ones
Origin: Asia
First observed in U.S.: Mid-1990s
 14-17 mm (Actual size)

Sources: Penn State Extension; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Capital Press graphic

ator wasps.

Researchers in New York, Delaware, Florida, Michigan and California are doing similar work.

In 2014, things began to go sideways. The wasp was found

in a mid-Atlantic state, and researchers immediately suspected wasps had escaped from quarantine. But DNA analysis showed it wasn't from any of the colonies that researchers around the country keep in quarantine.

Last summer, the same thing happened in Vancouver, Wash. A wasp was recovered by Washington State University, but it also wasn't from any of the quarantined populations. What's more, it wasn't from the same group as the wasp caught in the mid-Atlantic state.

This summer, entomologist Chris Hedstrom of ODA was checking a private property site near Oregon Health & Science University in Portland when he came across a cluster of BMSB eggs by accident.

The eggs had been wiped out, and it was clear wasp larvae were to blame. Wasps roughly chew their way out, while stinkbugs emerge through a neat hole, Hedstrom said.

"Oh, we have something here," Hedstrom described his reaction.

Recognizing the potential importance of the find, Hedstrom returned within 15 hours and set what are called "sentinel" traps baited with BMSB eggs collected in ODA's labo-

ratory in Salem.

Two days later, he found wasps had struck again. He collected the eggs and adult "guardian" wasps that protect the cluster from other parasitoids after they've deposited their young into the BMSB eggs. A single female can parasitize an entire egg cluster, Hedstrom said.

In July, the wasp larvae emerged in captivity and have since been identified.

Additional study by the Smithsonian's Systematic Entomology Lab will determine the lineage of the Portland wasps. Hedstrom believes they are part of the Vancouver group, given the relative proximity.

He said the wasps probably arrived in the Pacific Northwest the same way BMSB did — by hitching a ride into the Port of Portland or Port of Vancouver.

Hedstrom said the findings may speed up the process of gaining APHIS approval to release wasps as a biocontrol agent.

Hedstroms said the development is encouraging after years of telling growers it will take more time before biocontrols gain approval.

"We still have to error on the side of caution," he said.

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