

Habitat work to help monarch butterflies in Southern Oregon

By MARK FREEMAN
Mail Tribune

MEDFORD, Ore. (AP) — Western monarch butterflies migrating between the Southern Oregon coast and the south Cascades will soon get fresh patches of strategically placed milkweed and other nectar-bearing plants to create needed habitat on this leg of their storied journey through here.

A group of public and private entities, led by the Ashland-based Lomakatsi Restoration Project, have landed a \$193,000 foundation grant to restore and enhance 300 acres of western monarch habitat stretched across six sites along key migration paths through Southern Oregon.

Monarchs that winter along the California coast migrate along this route and the projects are strategically placed like stepping stones along that pathway.

“This is the epicenter of the migratory route,” says botanist Clint Emerson from the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, which is one of the participants in this habitat collaborative. “That makes this compelling.”

The plants will be grown at the federal government’s J. Herbert Stone Nursery in Central Point that will be planted along with milkweed seeds on public and private lands, including several plots already cleared and prepped for other restoration projects, Lomakatsi Executive Director Marko Bey says.

The plants include three locally native species of milkweed and 26 other plants such as coyote mint, winecup clarkia and harvest brodiaea, Emerson says.

While all the plants help butterflies, bees and other pollinators, the milkweed is tied closely to western monarchs’ life cycles.

Adult females lay their eggs in milkweed, and the ensuing caterpillars dine solely on milkweed before forming a chrysalis, from which they emerge as the royal-looking orange- and black-winged butterfly.

Monarchs produce four generations annually, each

one making a portion of the migration between Washington and Idaho through Oregon and down to California and Mexico.

In recent years, private groups like the Southern Oregon Monarch Advocates have cultivated small milkweed patches for butterflies called way stations, “but this is a large-scale restoration effort,” says Robert Coffan of SOMA, which joins Lomakatsi, the forest and four other public and private entities in this project.

Restoration sites include 60 acres of Rogue River-Siskiyou forest land along the coast, 60 more acres of Forest Service land on the western slopes of the Cascades near Mount McLoughlin, another 60 acres at Table Rocks and 120 acres of public and private lands in the Ashland-Colestin area.

Some of those lands already have been cleared and prepped as part of other Lomakatsi projects, including the Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration Project in the Ashland watershed known as AFAR.

That was important because the foundation grant did not cover site-preparation work, Bey says.

“It was a real plus that we’re laying this over other habitat projects,” Bey says.

Most of the work will be done in early 2017, Bey says.

Emerson says the multi-species plantings are different than milkweed way stations because they will create ecosystem-based landscapes instead of gardened plots of a single species.

The grant was one of several totaling \$3 million doled out by the foundation’s Monarch Conservation Fund and the only one targeting western monarch habitat. The lion’s share went to the eastern monarchs and their famously arduous migration journeys.

Coffan says western monarchs generally get stiffed in the funding world.

“But we raised the flag a little bit and somebody saw the flag,” Coffan says. “I’m happy with it.”

Study: More data needed on climate change perceptions

By JOHN O’CONNELL
Capital Press

CORVALLIS, Ore. — Social scientists have largely overlooked the Northwest in their efforts to assess farmers’ sentiments about climate change and how they may be adapting to it, according to a scientific literature review awaiting publication.

Regional climate officials say they’re aware of the review, conducted by a team of experts from Cornell University and Pennsylvania State University, and studies addressing the apparent information gap are already in the works.

The meta-analysis drew from 75 articles and reports published between 1997 and June 2015. The body of science included a single study from the Northwest — conducted under a USDA-funded climate grant involving University of Idaho, Oregon State University and Washington State University, called Regional Approaches to Climate Change.

“If we can’t understand the views of those who are going to have to change their



Courtesy of Cornell University

Allison Chatrchyan, director of the Cornell Institute for Climate Change and Agriculture, is an author of a recent meta-analysis finding few surveys have been conducted in the Northwest assessing farmer attitudes toward climate change.

behaviors, we’re not going to be able to make changes quickly enough,” said Allison Chatrchyan, an author of the study and director of the Cornell Institute for Climate Change and Agriculture.

Chatrchyan said most of the grower climate “attitudes and actions” surveys thus far have been conducted in the Southeast and Midwest.

In addition to further surveying growers in the Northwest and the Northeast, where grower sentiments on climate

change are also poorly understood, Chatrchyan believes it’s time to organize the first comprehensive national grower survey on the subject.

UI entomology professor Sanford Eigenbrode, director of the Northwest REACH grant, said no peer-reviewed publications have been released yet from the 2012 survey of 950 regional wheat farmers, though in-depth papers based on the survey results should be released soon. He said results of a 2015 follow-up survey with a smaller sample size are also forthcoming. He said the latest survey doesn’t appear to reflect any changes in Northwest grower perceptions, which are fairly consistent with overall U.S. grower attitudes.

Northwest Climate Hub fellow Gabrielle Roesch-McNally and her cohorts plan to release the first of the survey-based papers this fall. She said papers will delve into the sources of climate change information growers utilize, provide further insight on grower perceptions and highlight some of their preferred adaptation strategies, such as trying new cropping systems

and tillage methods. She also plans to expand surveys to encompass additional regional crops.

“If we’re going to better serve agricultural stakeholders, we need to better understand their needs, concerns and challenges,” Roesch-McNally said.

According to the meta-analysis, a weighted average of 65 percent of U.S. growers agree the climate is changing, but fewer farmers acknowledge it’s human-caused. Nationwide, farmers were also more interested in adapting to a changing climate than supporting policies to prevent climate change.

Rexburg, Idaho, farmer Lynn Wilcox, for example, believes more dams should be built to store water for drought years, but he sees no need for requirements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

“I am a believer in climate change. If that were not the case, we’d still be living in the Ice Age,” Wilcox said. “If there is a long-term shift towards hotter, I don’t believe man has caused that shift to happen.”

IPC to build on RODS Racing partnership

By JOHN O’CONNELL
Capital Press

BOISE — Endurance athletes Trace Dandrea and Doug Cole work for competing potato processing companies and admit they’re motivated by the chance to best one another when they race in Ironman events.

But they wear a common jersey, bearing the Idaho Potato Commission’s seal and the logo of Racing for Orphans with Down Syndrome.

As members of RODS Racing, the potato processing officials — Dandrea with McCain Foods and Cole with J.R. Simplot — have combined to raise more than \$50,000 toward adoption fees of foreign-born children with the genetic disorder. And they’ve tapped the strength of the Idaho potato industry to back their cause — a partnership that new consumer research confirms holds great promise to improve the public perception of Idaho spuds while helping children in dire need.

IPC has contributed more than \$100,000 to RODS Racing since agreeing to become its major sponsor in 2012. Dandrea and Cole convinced IPC RODS was a good fit with their industry, given the family focus of Idaho Potato marketing campaigns and the custom of Ironman athletes of eating foil-wrapped, boiled potatoes for a quick boost.

Since IPC signed onto the cause, RODS has grown from a handful of Idaho athletes to a team of more than 200 racers, who are now fundraising toward their 21st adoption.



Courtesy of Doug Cole

From left, Doug Cole, Anthony Dandrea and Trace Dandrea sport their RODS Racing jerseys before the 2016 Ironman Canada competition in Whistler, British Columbia. The three athletes have been leaders in the organization that has partnered with the Idaho potato industry to raise funds toward the adoptions of children born in foreign countries with Down Syndrome.

“If these children get beyond 5 years old, they go to a mental institution, and usually they die in the system,” Dandrea said.

The RODS mission is especially meaningful to Dandrea because his 14-year-old son, Anthony, was born with Down Syndrome.

“He’s been such a blessing to my family. He’s so full of love,” Dandrea said. “I’m always introducing people to Anthony, and I show the value of his life and what he’s given to us. It shows these kids’ lives are worth saving.”

IPC plans to significantly increase its RODS investment this year, based on the results of an IPC survey of 1,000 women in its target audience. After they were presented with information on the RODS sponsorship, 86 percent viewed it favorably, 59 percent agreed the information gave them an improved feeling about serving Idaho potatoes to their families and 52 percent had improved perceptions about potato health benefits.

“We’ve hit a home run with RODS, a program we don’t spend a lot of money on,” said

IPC President and CEO Frank Muir. “We’re going to figure out how to leverage it even more.”

A couple of years ago, RODS founder Brady Murray tasked Dandrea with starting a spin-off organization for youths with disabilities, RODS Junior. Of course, he’s relied heavily on Cole’s help in building RODS Junior.

“We talk to schools and encourage them to include classmates with intellectual or physical disabilities in school activities,” said Cole, who has a nephew with spina bifida who knows the hurt of exclusion.

Simplot and company employees who have participated in the Famous Idaho Potato Marathon have contributed funds toward RODS Junior, with some of the revenue supporting the Eagle High School varsity girls’ soccer team’s annual VIP soccer event for children with disabilities.

Players on the soccer team have also assisted youths with disabilities attempting the RODS Junior Youth Triathlon — a Hidden Springs, Idaho, event the organization has sponsored twice with consecutive \$5,000 grants from the USA Triathlon Foundation. Anthony has finished the triathlon three times, including back when it was still the YMCA Youth Triathlon.

“What I’ve learned is with special needs children, the No. 1 thing they need more than anything is inclusion,” Dandrea said. “The more they’re included with other kids, the more they’re going to grow physically, socially and intellectually.”

District continues pursuit of Columbia River water

By GEORGE PLAVEN
EO Media Group

The Westland Irrigation District isn’t giving up on a proposal to deliver mitigat-

ed irrigation water from the Columbia River, despite a lukewarm commitment from farmers.

The district board voted at a special meeting Sept. 8

to spend up to \$120,000 on additional plans and permits to keep the Central Project on schedule for the 2017 irrigation season. Patrons were already charged \$30 per irrigated acre a year ago to pay for \$326,000 in engineering studies.

But after nearly half a million dollars spent, the fate of the project is still very much in the air. Initial signups are well below the minimum needed to finance the pipeline running from the river to the canal. Farmers need to purchase at least 8,000 acre-feet at a cost of \$1,800 per acre-

foot to cover the \$14 million job.

Yet patrons have only agreed to purchase 2,601 acre-feet as of the Sept. 1 deadline. In letters submitted to the district, at least two growers reported they aren’t in a position to put up that kind of money while their return on investment remains unclear.

“The subscriber is being asked to put up a significant amount of cash with no guarantee the project will be completed or the subscriber will receive anything in return,” wrote a representative of Eagle Ranch in Echo.

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