

People & Places

Ranch maintains research tradition

Jim Morris seeks solutions to region's water worries

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

ETNA, Calif. — Rancher and hay producer Jim Morris has long been aware of the important role research plays in agriculture.

His operation, the Bryan-Morris Ranch, has been in his wife's family since the 1850s, and was taking part in soil-conservation and other research projects as early as the 1940s.

Morris has also embraced the mission. He is working with University of California researchers on projects to replenish the groundwater basin and find more efficient ways to irrigate alfalfa.

"I have a definition for sustainable farming," said Morris, who co-owns and manages the ranch. "That definition is, (the family) having done it for over 150 years, that seems sustainable to me. We would like that sustainability to continue into the future. ...

"You can't really fake it," he said. "It needs to be here later for my kids and grandkids. We're looking for things that are real ... things that will allow this opportunity to be sustainable well into the future. That's a big part of the reason we do this research."

Field day

Morris and his wife, Katie, and father-in-law, Mike Bryan, hosted a field day for about 50 other growers in late August to demonstrate their research. The event was sponsored by the UC Cooperative Extension and local cattlemen.

In one UCCE-aided project, Morris is hanging micro-sprinklers from a section of his pivot-irrigation system and comparing how his alfalfa field responds to the two types of watering. So far, the section with the micro-sprinklers is showing higher yields while using less water, he said. The sprinklers have enabled him to get 20 percent more water directly to his plants and achieve about 20 percent more growth than the plants watered conventionally, he said.

In the other, Morris ob-



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Jim Morris of the Bryan-Morris Ranch in Etna, Calif., points out the differences in alfalfa growth between a standard center-pivot irrigation system and one outfitted with sprinklers to water more efficiently. He is working with University of California researchers to test the system.

Western Innovator

Jim Morris

Occupation: Sheep, cattle and hay producer

Age: 56

Residence: Etna, Calif.

Family: Wife, Katie; daughter, Emma; sons, Ben and Will

Website: <http://www.bryan-morrisranch.com/index.htm>



tained permits to take stormwater from a local water district's irrigation canal and use it in one of his fields to replenish the aquifer. He also tried applying different amounts of water in different segments of the field earlier this year to learn how much water his alfalfa could take without losing yields.

The trials demonstrated that alfalfa fields could work for groundwater-recharge projects if grown on suitable, well-draining soils.

The project's goal is to show that replenishing the aquifer in the winter could help river levels later in the season, Morris said.

"I think everyone is really concerned about having a sustainable, long-term supply of water," UCCE farm

adviser Steve Orloff said during the field day.

The president of the Scott Valley Irrigation District, Morris said one benefit of conducting the trials on his ranch is it shows detractors that farmers care about water savings.

"Sometimes we feel like we have a target on our back, and when we do these things it helps to reduce that target," he said.

The ranch in the heart of the scenic Scott Valley about 30 miles south of the Oregon-California state line has been in the Bryan family since 1856. It currently has more than 300 acres in alfalfa and grass hay production and raises Suffolk/Hampshire cross sheep and Angus cattle.

History of involvement

The ranch has a history of getting involved — in the community and the industry. Katie Morris' grandfather started working with Siskiyou County's soil conservation service in the 1940s, Jim Morris said. The service later became the Siskiyou Resource Conservation District, and the ranch has worked with the district on resource-related issues over the years.

Morris and others established a groundwater advisory committee, which advises the county on issues related to the Scott River, and is "doing all we can to understand groundwater," he said.

Morris has experimented with different crops, too. He started growing sunflowers about 15 years ago, but when the market for sunflowers "went out from under us," he started planting carrots for the seed market, he said.

"We're always looking for anything else, too," Morris said. "We live in a pretty well isolated environment with not a lot of seed crops being grown (which could pose problems

with cross-pollination)."

But water is never far from the minds of growers along the Scott River, a key tributary of the beleaguered Klamath River and spawning ground for endangered salmon. Low levels in the Scott have triggered legal challenges by Indian tribes and environmentalists and led to state restrictions on irrigation.

Morris takes heart that the coho salmon run in the Scott "seems to be slowly growing over time, which makes me think some of the measures that have been taken are helping," he said.

In recent years, Scott Valley landowners have taken other water-saving steps, such as replacing old wells with new ones in more strategic locations and installing more efficient irrigation systems.

Morris said growers in the valley have learned to work together to resolve water issues, and he expects his ranch to continue to be part of those solutions. Research will play a big role in identifying any solutions.

"I want to know the truth," he said, "so we can be sustainable for another 150 years."

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Wisconsin wolf summit leans toward delisting

CUMBERLAND, Wis. (AP) — Politicians, farmers and hunters dominated a Great Lakes summit on wolves, expressing hope that the animals will soon come off the federal endangered species list.

Participants at the meeting Sept. 15 in the northwestern Wisconsin community of Cumberland talked about solutions to wolf problems, including attacks against domestic animals, in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan.

The summit was organized by two Republican lawmakers from northern Wisconsin, Sen. Tom Tiffany and Rep. Adam Jarchow, who hope control of the wolf population returns to state governments. As long as wolves are considered endangered, killing them is illegal unless it's for personal protection.

The Humane Society of the United States called the event one-sided, USA Today Network-Wisconsin reported.

Others argued that wolves have a place in the Great Lakes ecosystem.

"A few wolves are OK," said Don Peay, founder of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife and a speaker at the summit. "They're part of the system."

Peay and most others at the summit wanted to manage the wolf population by killing some off. Roughly 4,000 wolves roam the Great Lakes region.

Complaints of attacks on domestic animals have been rising with the wolf population, said David Ruid, wildlife biologist in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who helps manage complaints of wolf attacks on farms and ranches.

Ruid said the wolves aren't affecting the cattle industry's bottom line, but they are causing great hardship for farmers who live within their territory.

"These things are occur-

ring on the local family farm," Ruid said.

It's not just fatal attacks on livestock that's a problem, either, because wolves will harass animals, which can cause livestock to damage fences or slow their eating because they're on guard, he added.

Congress will likely debate the bill to delist the wolves after the November election, according to staff at the office of Sen. Ron Johnson, who introduced it.

Calendar

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Saturday, Sept. 24

Yamhill-Carlton FFA Alumni Benefit Dinner and Auction, 5 p.m. Carlton Legion Hall, 158 E. Main St., Carlton, Ore. All proceeds from this event directly benefit the Yamhill-Carlton FFA Chapter through the funding of scholarships, student leadership training, travel to events and more. The social hour and silent auction start at 5 p.m. and will be followed by the dinner and live auction at 7 p.m. Cost: \$15 per person. Tickets can be reserved online at ycffa.alumni@gmail.com or purchased at the door.

Washington State Fair, 9 a.m.-10 p.m., 110 Ninth Ave. SW, Puyallup. (253) 845-1771, <http://www.thefair.com/>

Sunday, Sept. 25

Washington State Fair, 9 a.m.-10 p.m., 110 Ninth Ave. SW, Puyallup.

(253) 845-1771, <http://www.thefair.com/>

Sunday, Oct. 2

17th Annual Salt Spring Island Apple Festival, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Over 450 varieties of apples are grown on Salt Spring Island, with an apple history back to 1860. Fulford Hall, 2591 Fulford Ganges Road, Salt Spring Island, B.C., Canada. <http://saltspringmarket.com/salt-spring-island-event/the-16th-annual-salt-spring-island-apple-festival>

Tuesday-Saturday

Oct. 4-8

World Dairy Expo, Alliant Energy Center, Madison, Wis. worlddairyexpo.com

Friday-Sunday

Oct. 7-9

Schafer Meadows Fiber Arts Festival, noon-5 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday. Grays Harbor County Fairgrounds Rabbit and Poultry Barn, Elma, Wash. The Alpaca Ranchers of the Northwest will take part.

Monday, Oct. 10

Why Save Farmland Discussion. 6 p.m. Boise State University Jordan Ballroom, 1700 University Drive, Boise. The Treasure Valley Food Coalition is launching this initiative with a series of questions: Why is the time right for preserving farmland in the Treasure Valley? What is the value of farmland preservation in the Treasure Valley (economic, cultural, environmental)? Who is already working on farmland preservation in the region? How can we work together moving forward? www.treasurevalleyfoodcoalition.org

Tuesday, Oct. 11

Why Save Farmland Discussion. 6 p.m. College of Idaho's Langroise Auditorium, 2112 Cleveland Blvd., Caldwell, Idaho. The Treasure Valley Food Coalition is launching this initiative with a series of questions: Why is the time right for preserving farmland in the region? What is the value of farmland preservation in the Treasure Valley (economic, cultural, environmental)? Who is already working on farmland preservation in the TV? How can we work together moving forward? www.treasurevalleyfoodcoalition.org

Saturday-Sunday

Oct. 15-16

All About Fruit Show, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Clackamas County Fairplex, Canby, Ore. This is an opportunity to taste hundreds of pears, apples, kiwis and grapes and order a custom-grafted tree. Speakers will answer questions and an ID Team will identify "mystery" apples. www.homeorchard-society.org/events/2016-fruit-show/

Gorge Fruit and Craft Fair, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Hood River County Fairgrounds, 3020 Wyeast Road, Odell, Ore. www.hoodriverfair.org

Wednesday-Saturday

Oct. 19-22

2016 National FFA Convention and Expo. Bankers Life Field House and Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis, Ind. www.ffa.org

Saturday, Oct. 22

Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom 16th Annual Fall Harvest Dinner and Fundraiser, 5 p.m. CH2M Hill Alumni Center, Oregon State University, 725 SW 26th St., Corvallis. The social hour and silent auction start at 5 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:30 and

the oral auction at 7:45. oregonaitc.org/

Friday-Sunday

Oct. 28-30

Oregon State Beekeepers Association Fall Conference 2016, The Oregon Garden, 879 W. Main St., Silverton, Ore. The theme for this conference is "Beekeeping Out of the Box." Other topics such as honeybee health will be covered as well. Speakers include Tom Seeley, George Hansen, Ramesh Sagili, John Skinner, Elna Nino, Judy Wu and Miksa Queens. There will be a beginning beekeeping class running concurrently with the main meeting on Saturday. OSU will have a bee lab on site to analyze bee samples.

Sunday, Oct. 30

Farm Succession Planning Workshop. 4-8:30 p.m. Forest Grove United Church of Christ, 2032 College Way, Forest Grove, Ore. Hosted by Tualatin SWCD, Rogue Farm Corps and Dairy Creek Community Food Web. RSVP requested at 971-409-6806 or nellie@roguefarmcorps.org, <http://www.swcd.net/event/leaving-a-legacy/>