

Apples fit millennials' values, Wal-Mart rep says

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — Millennials are the largest part of the workforce now, so if stores want to sell fruit — or anything else — that segment needs to be considered, says Mike Hulett, senior merchant over orchard items for Wal-Mart stores.

Speaking at the Washington Tree Fruit Association annual meeting in Wenatchee on Dec. 5., Hulett showed a millennial song parody on

YouTube to help the audience understand their carefree attitude. Millennials are Americans born between 1981 and 2000.

It drew laughs and while Hulett called it "hilarious," he said millennials drive consumer trends, are into experience, are fair-minded and have their own consumer values that apples fit.

"When the recession hit, it impacted consumer trust. It changed the way people spend their money. It made



Mike Hulett

consumers more aware of how food is made and it all adds up to trust," Hulett said.

Millennials are for savvy spending but they value experience in their purchasing, he said. They see a responsibility in making a positive impact on their community reflected through the food they buy, he said.

"Global issues matter less and local issues matter more in their minds," he said.

In the foodie culture where

food is an experience, new apples should do well because millennials show their status by what they do, Hulett said. They like to try new things and share it on social media, so if your apple has consistent crisp quality they will share that, and if it doesn't they will "tell it in even a more prolific way," he said.

Some 70 percent of the apples Wal-Mart stores buy are Red Delicious followed by Granny Smith, Fuji and Gala, Hulett said.

"We are the largest buyer

of Reds, but we are purposefully taking that down," he said. "Reds are doing better from SmartFresh (natural storage enhancer) but still not meeting the taste experience."

Honeycrisp meets the taste test, Gala is falling off and club varieties such as Opal, Envy, Ambrosia are where consumers are headed, he said. Washington's new Cosmic Crisp apple should do well, he said.

Millennials also factor time, health and nutrition, food safety and authenticity

in purchasing, he said.

Labeling and packaging are a great way of communicating, he said. Information about fruit can be shared on the outside of stand-up bags that doesn't get transmitted in bulk bin displays, he said.

"Fresh food is the bull's-eye," Hulett said. "Nothing relates more than fresh and organic and local."

Wal-Mart stores aim to keep meat, produce and deli items fresh because fresh is what 87 percent of customers are looking for, he said.



File photo

Two marbled murrelets are seen. Environmentalist groups want an injunction to stop logging on roughly 50 acres of private property that was once part of Oregon's Elliott State Forest that they say threaten the endangered bird.

Groups seek order to stop logging on former Oregon state forestland

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Environmentalist groups want an injunction to stop logging on roughly 50 acres of private property that was once part of Oregon's Elliott State Forest.

Three nonprofits — Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity and Audubon Society of Portland — have asked U.S. District Judge Ann Aiken to prohibit tree harvest on the parcel due to hazards to the threatened marbled murrelet.

Logging plans were previously abandoned in the area because Oregon realized it would cause Endangered Species Act violations, but a 355-acre parcel was bought in 2014 by Roseburg Forest Products Co. and its Scott Timber subsidiary for nearly

\$800,000, according to plaintiffs.

The environmentalists claim that harvesting a 50-acre site, known as the Benson Snake Unit, within that parcel will unlawfully destroy the habitat of marbled murrelets, which occupy old growth trees in the tract.

"The defendants are proposing to do exactly what the state thought it couldn't," said Dan Kruse, attorney for the environmentalists, during oral arguments on Nov. 22 in Eugene, Ore.

An injunction is warranted because the plaintiffs are likely to prevail in the lawsuit and logging would irreparably harm the species, he said.

In contrast, there's nothing to show that the trees would be any less valuable if harvesting is delayed by a

year or two, Kruse said.

Roseburg Forest Products counters that an internationally recognized environmental consulting firm chose a site that's not occupied by the threatened bird.

"They hired independent experts to determine where the birds might be in the stand and how they're using the stand," said Dominic Carollo, attorney for the timber company.

The company will also conduct logging during the autumn and winter, when marbled murrelets are out at sea, in an area that's not considered critical habitat for the species, the defendants claim.

The case laid out by the plaintiffs doesn't demonstrate that logging will cause actual "take" of marbled murrelets under ESA, Carollo said.

"At best they've proven

it's hypothetical or possible ... which isn't sufficient," he said. "They don't have the facts or the evidence to show there will be death or injury to the marbled murrelet."

Kruse argued that "take" isn't limited to destruction of nesting areas used by the species.

Under ESA, "take" also occurs when logging disrupts other behaviors necessary to the bird's life cycle, such as courtship, he said.

Similarly, it can harm people if you bulldoze their living or kitchen while sparing the bed in which they sleep, he said.

Science has shown marbled murrelets need large blocks of habitat to survive, Kruse said.

"Fragmentation has significant impacts on marbled murrelets," he said.

Washington dilutes fine for spilling vinegar into river

Capital Press

Fleischmann's Vinegar Co. slashed its fine for spilling concentrated vinegar into a Washington river by installing more energy-efficient lights at its Summer plant, the state Department of Ecology announced Tuesday.

Ecology reduced to \$2,000 from \$10,000 the penalty for releasing 10,000 gallons March 4 into the White River in Pierce County.

Fleischmann's spent at least \$8,000 on energy-sav-

ing measures and will cut its annual electricity consumption by 10,525 kilowatt-hours per year, according to Ecology.

The spill was caused by a faulty valve. The river was high at the time of the spill, minimizing damage, according to Ecology.

Fleischmann's was fined \$24,000 in 2014 by Ecology. The company was fined \$4,000 for spilling concentrated vinegar into the ground and \$19,000 for violations found in follow-up inspections.



Courtesy of University of Idaho

Brent Olmstead speaks at the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Ag Days Dinner awards ceremony in 2014.

Olmstead named Idaho ag college assistant dean

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Milk Producers of Idaho Executive Director Brent Olmstead will join the leadership team at the University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

Olmstead was named the college's assistant dean for government and external relations and will replace Rich Garber, who retired from CALS this year.

He will work closely with the agricultural industry and will continue to work out of his current office in Boise, which is in the same building that houses leaders of several of Idaho's farm commodity groups, including wheat, barley, beans, wine and milk.

Olmstead, who was born and raised on a cattle ranch near Twin Falls, is also a member of Food Producers of Idaho and the state coordinator for the Idaho Business Coalition for Immigration Reform.

News of his selection was welcomed by the state's farm industry.

He has been responsible for starting several organizations and efforts to better agriculture and natural resource groups in Idaho, said Rick Waitley, executive director of Association Management Group, which represents 40 ag organizations.

He said Olmstead, who has 25 years of experience in public and governmental relations, "has been respected as a lobbyist over the years and has a strong working knowledge of the public policy process."

Olmstead served eight years as vice president of the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry and handled that group's agricultural, natural resources and environmental issues.

"Brent Olmstead brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position with CALS," Waitley said in an email. "Brent has the full support of industry stakeholders and we are all looking forward to working with him in his new role...."

When Olmstead begins his new job later this month, he will work with farm industry leaders as well as the state's agribusiness community and other stakeholders.

"It's an exciting time to be involved in agriculture and with the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences," he said in a news release. "The future for CALS is unlimited and I am looking forward to working with all segments of Idaho's agricultural community."

With the addition of Olmstead, the college is close to completing its administrative leadership team.

CALS Dean Michael Parrella began in February, Barbary Petty was named UI's Extension director in May and Mark McGuire in November took over as director of the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station, which oversees UI's research efforts.

The associate dean of academic programs at CALS is retiring in June and the person named to fill that position will complete the college's academic leadership team.

Parrella said he was thrilled with Olmstead's selection.

"CALS is moving forward aggressively with many programs and projects that will enhance our statewide teaching, research and extension mission," he said in a news release. "Brent is an ideal person to front these initiatives to the legislature, commissions, allied industries and stakeholders in Idaho."

Biggest fertilizer distribution plant opening planned

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

POCATELLO, Idaho — Officials at Valley Agronomics expect to open what will be the state's largest fertilizer distribution plant before the month's end.

Sid Jensen, the project manager, said construction of the estimated \$10 million facility is on schedule and on budget. It's on 12 reclaimed acres within a federal Superfund site where FMC Corp. ran the world's largest elemental phosphate plant until 2001.

Jensen hopes to start moving dry fertilizer into the facility during the third week of December, and to spend the next three months filling the plant to capacity.

Valley Agronomics is a partnership between Valley Wide Co-op — a regional agronomy cooperative based in Rupert, Idaho — and WinField Solutions, a Land O'Lakes company. Jensen said the company has been pleased by customer interest in the new facility, as well as the many new cooperative members it's already attracted.

"We've got brisk demand, and we have several million in prepaid business on the books," Jensen said.

The dry storage building has space for 26,000 tons of dry fertilizer, and the tank farm, scheduled to open in



John O'Connell/Capital Press

A ramp is excavated accessing the new Valley Agronomics facility near Pocatello, Idaho. The plant is scheduled to open this month.

March, has capacity for 2 million gallons of liquid fertilizer.

Jensen said the company chose the site largely because it can accommodate unit trains — entire trains of cars hauling a single commodity, sent from a common origin to the same destination without being reassembled en route.

Jensen said the freight savings — \$25 to \$30 per ton on a large unit train — will be passed on to customers. The greatest advantage, he said, is that the plant should maintain

an adequate supply of fertilizer, avoiding potential shortages when rail cars are also needed to ship grain.

A shop and an office-warehouse will be constructed in the second phase, which Jensen said could start in 2017.

Jensen said fertilizer will be shipped directly from the plant to farms. He said orders in the American Falls and Pocatello areas have been filled out of Idaho Falls and Hansen. Pocatello will now supply Valley's Preston and Idaho

Falls facilities, which lack rail access.

Fertilizer prices are tied to petroleum and have been down lately, Jensen said.

The company, which also runs convenience stores and has petroleum and feed divisions, is within the top 20 of the CropLife 100 rankings of agricultural retailers.

"We started 12 years ago with barely making a profit to \$300 million in sales now," Jensen said.

FMC consultant Paul Yochum said FMC is nearing the end of the second year of a three-year cleanup at the site, which will require a total \$60 million investment. In the first year, FMC graded the property and built ponds to catch surface runoff.

FMC is now finishing 36-inch caps over the former production area, and 14-inch caps over shale. The third phase will entail pumping groundwater from the shallow aquifer and removing arsenic.

Kent Rudeen, chairman of Power County Development Authority, said remediation was recently completed for a 73-acre parcel at the site, which is now available for industrial redevelopment. Rudeen said marketing of the rest of the grounds has moved slowly.

"FMC is looking at hiring a Realtor to seek out interest in the property," Rudeen said.