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# Idaho

## Wheat growers oppose dam breaching

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — Breaching four dams on the lower Snake River would cause significant harm to the Pacific Northwest agricultural industry, Idaho wheat industry leaders said Nov. 29 during a public meeting.

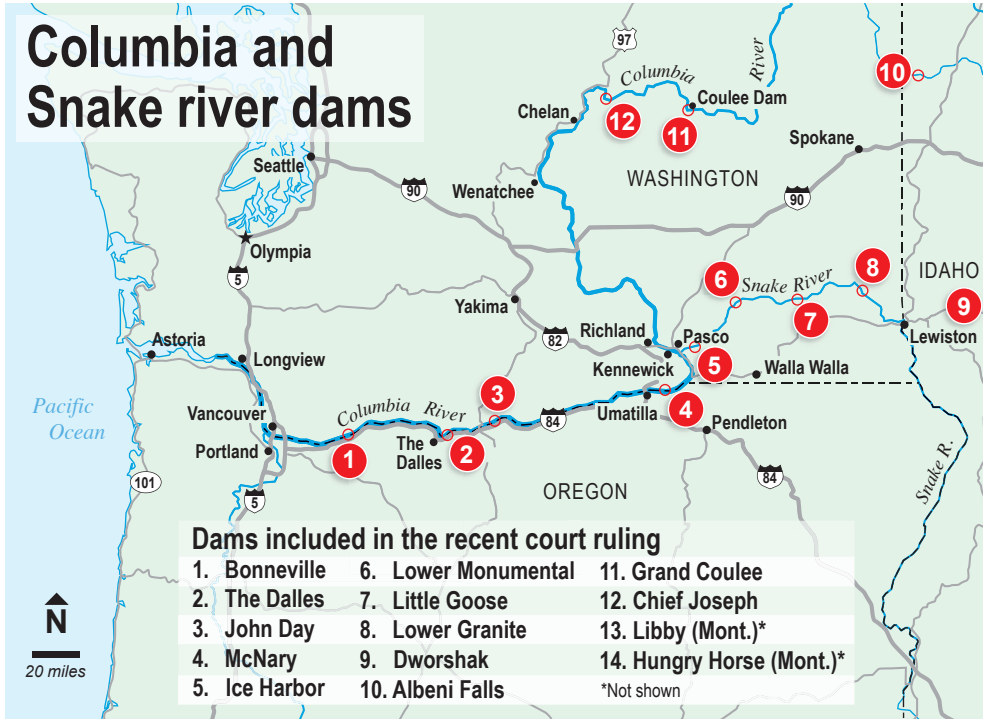
The meeting is one of 15 being held around the region by federal agencies to get input on the operation of the hydropower dams on the Columbia-Snake River system, a process initiated by a federal judge handling a lawsuit brought by dam removal supporters.

It's critical that agriculture, especially the wheat industry, makes its concerns known during the public comment period, said Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Blaine Jacobson.

"The dams are absolutely crucial to the health of the Idaho wheat industry," he said. "Wheat is a global market and it's a very competitive market and if we have to rail it to Portland, it would make a number of the growers uncompetitive on the world market."

The U.S. district court judge earlier this year ordered the federal agencies that operate the Columbia-Snake River hydropower system to review all reasonable options for operating it in order to minimize the impact on endangered salmon.

That decision came in response to a lawsuit by conservation groups in favor of



breaching the dams to improve salmon runs. They challenged the biological opinion for operating the system and the judge required the agencies to update the environmental impact statement on how the system is operated.

The agencies are holding scoping meetings around the Pacific Northwest to gather public comment and a draft environmental impact statement on the system's operation is expected to be published for public comment in 2020.

Breaching those dams would make the rivers unnavigable for barges that move wheat and other products to port for export.

According to the Port of

Lewiston and Northwest River Partners, about 10 percent of all U.S. wheat exports move through the lower Snake River dams and more than 50 percent of Idaho's wheat is exported through the Columbia-Snake River system.

In addition, more than 42 million tons of commercial cargo valued at more than \$20 billion moves through the system each year and 60 percent of the energy produced in Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Washington is generated by the rivers' dams.

Jacobson said it's almost inconceivable that the dams would be removed but a vocal minority that supports that is making their voices heard and it's important the agricultural

industry also weigh in on the issue.

"I think the facts are on the side of keeping the (system) the way it is," he said. "But if the silent majority doesn't turn out and lets the vocal minority rule the day, then it will be bad for the entire PNW."

North Idaho farmer Eric Hasselstrom said that without the ability to use the river system to transport wheat to port, his transportation costs would likely double.

"If we lost the dams, I don't think we'd be competitive and in business any more," he said. "We have to have our voices heard because there are going to be a lot of comments against (the dams)."

## New lawmaker hopes to improve technology infrastructure in rural Idaho

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — New Idaho lawmaker Megan Blanksma hopes to shine a spotlight on the lack of technology infrastructure in rural Idaho, which she says places farmers and ranchers at a competitive disadvantage.

"I want to try to see what we can do to push out this technological infrastructure into rural areas and improve it," said Blanksma, a Hammett farmer.

"We have to have good, solid internet for us to compete."

Blanksma is one of four new farmers or ranchers that will serve in the Idaho Legislature when it convenes in January.

She said improving internet access and other technology infrastructure in rural parts of the state will be her top priority. Farmers and ranchers rely on reliable internet access to do things like run irrigation pivots and soil moisture sensors and file reports required by USDA and industry, she said.

Blanksma currently uses a mobile hot spot shared by other users, which she says is "decent" but not reliable.

Fast, reliable internet access is a basic service in other areas, which puts many rural producers at a disadvantage, she said.

"All sorts of things (on the farm) are tied to technological infrastructure," she said. "There are a lot of competitive barriers out here just due to a lack of technological infrastructure."



Courtesy of MeganBlanksma.com

Megan Blanksma is one of four farmers and ranchers that will join the Idaho Legislature during the upcoming session.

Sen. Steve Bair, a retired farmer from Blackfoot and chairman of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee, said he's not sure if the issue is a legislative one or best addressed by the free market.

But lack of technological infrastructure is definitely a hurdle in rural parts of the state, said Bair, who now manages an agribusiness company.

"Out in the country, you're on your own," he said. "There's a problem, no doubt about it."

Other new farmers who won seats in the legislature include Carl Crabtree, a rancher; Christy Zito, a Hammett farmer; and Karey Hanks, an East Idaho farmer. Crabtree will be in the Senate, and the others will be in the House.

Crabtree, from Grangeville, is a former president of the Idaho Cattle Association and served on a National Cattlemen's Beef Association committee that evaluated the outcomes of money spent by NCBA.

### LEGAL

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Probate Department  
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF  
Fran Bledsoe, Deceased  
No. 16PB07260

### NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the undersigned has been appointed Personal Representative of the above estate. All persons having claims against the estate are required to present them to the undersigned Personal Representative in care of the undersigned attorney at: 319 Sixth Street SW, Albany, OR 97321 within four months after the date of the first publication of this notice, as stated below, or such claims may be barred.

All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceedings in this estate may obtain additional information from the records of the Court, the Personal Representative, or the attorney for the Personal Representative.

DATED and first published November 25, 2016.

Personal Representative:  
KYLE B. DILL  
2735 Gilbert St. S.  
Salem, OR 97302

Attorney:  
DAVID B. BECKHAM  
319 Sixth Avenue SW  
Albany, OR 97321

## Farm Bureau leaders: Election results show power of rural America

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — The results of the recent national election demonstrated the power of rural America when it flexes its collective muscle, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation leaders told members during the group's annual meeting.

They pointed to both the presidential and state election results to make their point and motivate IFBF members to get involved and have their voices heard.

IFBF CEO Rick Keller said it was rural Americans who carried President-elect Donald Trump to victory. He used a national map showing how counties voted to make his point.

With few exceptions, rural counties voted red (Republican) while coastal cities and main population centers voted blue (Democrat).

"It was rural America ... that made him win," Keller said. "When rural America

gets together, we can do it right. They forgot rural America. We must always make sure our voices are heard."

On the state level, farmers and ranchers ensured passage of a constitutional amendment that guarantees the Idaho Legislature's ability to reject rules proposed by state agencies, said IFBF President Bryan Searle.

That same amendment was narrowly defeated two years ago but IFBF pushed hard for its passage this year and Farm Bureau members were directly responsible, said Searle, a Shelley farmer.

"It's because of your efforts ... that it passed," he said.

More than 13,000 farmers and ranchers in Idaho are members of IFBF and several hundred of them attended IFBF's annual meeting Nov. 29-Dec. 1.

Searle encouraged members to become familiar with the group's policy manual and be willing to speak up on issues important to agriculture

and rural Idaho and rally their neighbors.

"Are you willing to go to the statehouse and testify?" he said. "Because we need real people to go to our state legislature and talk about real issues."

During the 2016 legislative session, IFBF took a position for or against 77 bills or resolutions and was on the winning side of 68 of them, which is an 88 percent success rate, Searle said.

Farm Bureau's political action committee gave money to 83 candidates who ran in the recent election and 95 percent of them won.

"All of that happens because of what you do and your efforts," Searle said. "It takes a team. We have to work together."

Keller said Trump was promising regulatory reform and farmers, ranchers and other rural Americans tired of being over-regulated decided the presidential election.



Courtesy of Idaho Potato Commission

The Great Big Idaho Potato Truck accompanied an 80-foot Engelmann spruce, bound to be displayed at the U.S. Capitol as the People's Tree, on its trek from Idaho's Payette National Forest, where it was cut.

## Thanksgiving shipments of fresh potatoes up

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS — The state's fresh potato packers shipped substantially more volume prior to the recent Thanksgiving holiday compared to the same period of 2015, according to a USDA report.

Industry officials say the exceptional quality of Idaho's large spud crop has fueled demand. Nonetheless, fresh potato prices have remained stagnant.

Through Nov. 23, the state's fresh sheds had shipped 10.116 million hundredweight of spuds, up nearly 8 percent from the 9.365 million hundredweight shipped through that date in 2015.

The report listed Russet Burbank prices out of the Twin Falls and Burley district at \$6 to \$7 for the three largest tuber sizes in 50-pound cartons, and \$6.50 to \$8 for cartons of the four smallest tuber sizes. Consumer bags ranged from \$5 to \$7 for five, 10-pound sacks.

"The Thanksgiving rush was crazy," said Idaho Potato Commission member Randy Hardy, an Oakley grower who serves as chairman of Sun Valley Potatoes.

Hardy said the report confirmed his suspicions about a sizable increase in shipments, which he attributes to buyer interest in an ample supply of high-quality spuds, as well as IPC early marketing campaigns.

He's been surprised, however, by the lack of movement in fresh prices, especially given that sheds have worked through the initial post-harvest glut and are taking spuds out of storage.

"That's the frustrating part about it," Hardy said. "When they see we don't have a burdensome crop, I would think they would start moving prices up."

Potato production estimates have not been released. However, Hardy said it's clear Idaho's crop will be larger than last year, with fewer defects. Nationwide yields should be "spot on with last year," he said.

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