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## Idaho

# Peas take hold in East Idaho rotations

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

RIRIE, Idaho — Growers near this small Eastern Idaho city have started planting green peas to diversify their limited crop rotations.

The buyer, George F. Brocke & Sons Inc. of Kendrick, Idaho, sees a couple of major advantages to adding Ririe to its production base, despite the added cost of hauling the peas to Northern Idaho.

Dirk Hammond, the company's administrative services manager, explained growers near Ririe face no problems with weevils — which are a major pea pest elsewhere — due to the high elevation. Furthermore, adding a new growing area spreads risk. The company's Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho and Montana growers raise peas without irrigation, and their results can vary based on precipitation. The Eastern Idaho growers, who use irrigation, provide



Clark Hamilton, front, and his son, Logan, check a field of peas in Ririe, Idaho. Hamilton's experiment with commercial pea production has resulted in an increasingly popular rotation crop for growers in his area.

consistent quality and yields.

"It's a relationship I think we both want to continue to pursue and expand," Hammond said. "We're both learning what works well for each other, and it's an educational process."

Ririe grower Clark Hamilton made the initial pitch to Brocke & Sons. He was in need of a crop to break up his grain rotation in some of his fields that are too rocky for raising spuds. He planted 120 acres for the company during

his trial year in 2014 and has increased his pea crop this spring to 270 acres. Hamilton said there's been some limited production of peas for seed in his area in the past, but raising commercial peas is a new trend.

Clark has also hosted grower meetings to make his neighbors aware of the option. This spring, 10 Eastern Idaho growers will raise about 1,000 acres of peas.

Growers are paid 10.5 cents per pound, and can produce from 3,000 to 5,500 pounds per acre under irrigation. Area growers say the return is slightly less than soft white spring wheat, but peas require fewer inputs and they fix a bit of nitrogen. Hamilton said he has produced some of his best grain crops following peas.

"Every crop we've had so far behind the peas shows a definite health advantage," Hamilton said. "We're not getting wealthy, but we feel over time we'll have a healthier rotation."

Ririe grower Brigham Cook raised 80 acres of peas in his first crop last season, but he has about 600 acres that are poor for spuds and could benefit from adding peas to the rotation. Cook believes low wheat and barley

prices have made peas more attractive.

"It's a crop that apparently fits the area well," Cook said. "Marketing appears to be the issue."

Eastern Idaho growers raise Banner, a pea variety that Hammond said is popular with customers and stands upright, producing peas on the upper half of the plant. This enables growers to harvest their peas with wheat headers.

Hammond said Brocke & Sons exports about 70 percent of its peas. He anticipates pea prices will increase slightly before harvest, as challenging conditions limited last season's production, and spring planting appears to be down this year.

According to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, 1.382 million acres of dry, edible spring peas were produced in 2016 in the U.S., including 29,000 acres in Idaho. Washington growers raised 90,000 acres, and the top pea state, Montana, produced 610,000 acres.

## NRCS issues more local disaster declarations as Idaho flooding spreads

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

POCATELLO, Idaho — With rivers already spilling beyond their banks and heavy snowpack remaining in the mountains, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service has issued local disaster declarations making 33 more Idaho counties eligible for flood-recovery aid.

Curtis Elke, NRCS state conservationist, said his April 25 declaration applied to all of the counties that weren't covered under recent emergency declarations issued by President Donald Trump. Counties covered by the presidential declaration — Bingham, Cassia, Elmore, Franklin, Gooding, Jefferson, Lincoln, Minidoka, Twin Falls and Washington — still have the best odds of obtaining assistance, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Elke said.

"I have personally witnessed other areas in the state that are also needing some



The Portneuf River overflows its banks April 26 in Sacajawea Park in Pocatello, Idaho.

type of assistance — technical assistance or financial — for flood relief," Elke said.

Elke said he's witnessed flood damage, or signs that damage may be imminent, in Bonner and Boundary counties, along the Boise River and in the Weiser area.

"I really don't think we've seen the worst yet," Elke said, adding he's pulling NRCS staff off other projects to focus on flooding assistance.

According to the National Weather Service, flood warnings were in effect April 27 for the Portneuf River from

Pocatello to Inkom, the Humboldt River at Battle Mountain and the Boise River through Ada and Canyon counties. A flood advisory was in effect in the Pegrum and Dingle areas of Bear Lake County, due to flooded low-lying farm fields.

The Portneuf was listed at 1.3 feet above flood stage. Jim Guthrie, of Inkom, said about 125 acres of his family's farm land has been covered by up to 3 feet of flood water.

"I think it will be June before we can ever get on the ground," said Guthrie, who still hopes to plant forage on

the flooded ground and salvage a bit of feed production.

NRCS water supply specialist Ron Abramovich said most of Idaho had already received its usual April precipitation as of April 26, with snowpacks still well above normal in many basins — 209 percent in the Little Wood, 205 percent in the Big Wood, 194 percent in the Big Lost and 159 percent in both the Boise and the Upper Snake basins above Palisades Reservoir.

"The runoff from April through July is going to be well above average," Abramovich said.

Elke said counties included in his declaration are eligible for assistance through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, aimed at protecting water quality. The program, which requires a third-party sponsor and that a natural disaster poses an imminent threat to life or property, covers up to 75 percent of funding toward certain conservation practices.



Capital Press File

The sentencing and restitution hearing for a Jerome, Idaho, rancher has been set for June 5.

## Judge delays sentencing in cattle theft case

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

JEROME, Idaho — Judge Eric Wildman on Monday delayed sentencing Jason David Anderson — who in March pleaded guilty to one count of grand theft for selling 99 head of cattle belonging to a California man — until the parties agree on restitution.

Wildman said full restitution to the victim is "paramount" and he wants a good idea of what that restitution is without significant disagreement between the parties before sentencing Anderson.

The judge has now combined sentencing with the restitution hearing, with both set for June 5.

"I am focusing on the defendant's ability to pay restitution," he said, adding that he wants assurance that restitution is going to be paid and directing the parties to set up a schedule of payments.

Anderson's attorney, Doug Nelson, said the restitution hearing was going to be complicated because the victim owes his client money and he would need at least a three-hour slot for that hearing.

There is "money this guy owes Jason," he said. "It really is not simple."

The victim said he was not surprised by Anderson's allegations.

"He probably figures after all this is done, I owe him money," Gary Marchi said in a phone interview from his California home.

By Marchi's calculations, Anderson owes him more than \$450,000, and that doesn't take into account what the cattle were worth at the time Anderson sold them or the cattle he sold for which there is no record, he said.

In his plea deal, Anderson agreed to pay restitution to Marchi at a value to be determined for 43 cows, 17 calves and one bull he sold in 2012 and the sale of 18 calves born in 2012 and 20 calves born in 2013.

Anderson — a Jerome rancher and owner of Snake

River Bull Test LLC and Rocky Mountain Ultrasound & Genetics LLC — was initially charged with eight counts of grand theft, six counts of obtaining a brand certificate with false information and one count of unlawful branding by the Jerome County prosecuting attorney in July 2016, according to court documents.

The activity took place between the fall of 2011 and January 2015 and involved Marchi's shorthorn cattle.

Marchi, who raises pastured cattle for beef, said he sent the majority of his cattle to Anderson in Idaho in June 2011 because he lost all his rental pasture in California when the land was sold. He had never met Anderson but made his acquaintance through another cattleman.

Anderson's failure to ship steers to California after several requests by Marchi and his eventual contention that Marchi's cattle had been confiscated by a deputy sheriff due to a lien against the cattle resulted in an investigation, launched by the Idaho State Police in November 2014, according to court documents.

Marchi said Anderson never sent him a bill but he paid him regularly, about \$37,000 in total.

Marchi's registered herd was the result of a long-term breeding program, which earned recognition for quality and consistency, he said.

"All my life, I worked for this. And in one swift moment, he (Anderson) tears the whole thing apart. It's hard to believe this is even happening," he said.

In a letter to the court, Marchi said he had been developing his beef-producing shorthorn herd since the 1970s and loss of that line has caused him financial and emotional stress, sending him into depression and causing him sleepless nights and stomach issues.

"Anderson didn't just steal, rebrand and sell some cows. He stole my life's work," he said.

## Eastern Idaho dryland farms off to slow start

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

ARBON VALLEY, Idaho — Eastern Idaho farmers with irrigation have reported tall and thick winter grain stands, but most of the region's dryland growers say their fall

crops are well behind normal.

The start of last fall was dry, which posed no problem for growers with irrigation but delayed planting for the region's dryland farmers. Major storms ultimately arrived to support germination, but cold weather came early, and dry-

land fall crops entered winter after a short growth window.

On April 28, Arbon Valley dryland grower Twain Hayden walked along a field of short, soft white winter wheat plants dusted by early morning snow flurries, explaining his fall grain had yet to break dormancy, due to the cold spring.

Wet weather had also prevented Hayden from planting any spring grain, aside from a few patches of winter kill he over-seeded in fall grain fields.

"Our average time for starting to plant over the last 30 years is April 19, and our average finishing time is May 11," Hayden said.

University of Idaho reported the discovery of stripe rust on volunteer wheat in Parma on April 24, and Hayden said moist conditions can lead to trouble with fungal diseases. Hayden also noted moist soils can lead to vigorous plant growth, but insufficient root systems for when the weather turns hot and dry, and late planting can cause grain to head at the hottest time of year.

But Hayden said he's happy to endure any challenges associated with an abundance of soil moisture, having experienced too many extremely dry seasons in recent years.

"We had a combination of a wet (late) fall, a wet winter and a wet spring, and usually all three of them don't go together," Hayden said. "Dryland farmers just have a really hard time complaining about moisture."

Hayden believes the key to a successful season will still be avoiding prolonged spells of 100-degree weather in June.

On his dryland acres in Lava Hot Springs, grower Kevin Koester said alfalfa that should be a foot tall by now is about 3 inches tall.

Koester added, "This fall wheat is really struggling. It needs some sunshine, but we've had an incredible amount of moisture."

Koester said he'll have to "force the issue" in planting spring grain into cold, wet soil, which could hurt germination. But he also won't worry about an important variable — moisture — this season.

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