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# Idaho



Courtesy of Brad Gamett  
Brad Gamett is the new University of Idaho Extension educator for Butte County.

## New Butte County Extension educator popular with local forage growers

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

ARCO, Idaho — In his previous job, Brad Gamett created another market for local hay and forage growers and quashed their problems with several noxious weeds.

Gamett served as the county's weed superintendent from 2003 through this January, when he became Butte County's new University of Idaho Extension educator.

In his initial year as weed superintendent, Gamett created a weed-free certification program for local hay and straw. Ranchers who use public land in Idaho are required to supplement feeding only with certified weed-free hay. Furthermore, many straw buyers seek to avoid importing weed seeds in bales used for horse bedding.

"We got about \$20 more a ton out of our straw by selling it weed-free," said local grower Mark Telford.

Telford said Gamett also controlled noxious weeds along the Lost River through his farm, helping to keep weed seeds from spreading into his crops, and he credits Gamett with being outstanding at finding grant revenue to support his projects.

Last year, Gamett said

2,000 acres of Butte County crop land were certified as weed-free through his program. Gamett, who remains active in the Lost River Co-operative Weed Management Area, has relied on biological control to get a handle on his county's noxious weeds problem.

"At present, by and large, most species of noxious weeds here are on the decline because of management," Gamett said.

When he first became weed superintendent, Gamett said leafy spurge and spotted knapweed were widespread in the area. The noxious weeds out-compete native forage plants on range and are toxic to livestock. Minimizing the weed seed supply is important to hay and straw producers.

From local sources, Gamett began collecting populations of predatory insects that evolved along with the weeds in Europe or Asia to release for weed control. He explained that he uses only insects that have been tested by federal agencies and shown to pose no problems of their own.

"We don't have the weeds any more to warrant massive bug releases because the insects have been so effective," Gamett said.

# Water managers cope with too much

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

BOISE — Following an early May warm spell, water officials are concerned that river levels throughout the state are already orders of magnitude above usual peak flows, with most of an extraordinarily deep snowpack still remaining at high elevations.

On May 11, federal water managers said flood-control releases from Lucky Peak Dam hadn't kept pace with increasing runoff into the Boise River, and they'd have to step up releases to levels that could damage downstream property. The Boise River Reservoir system was more than 81 percent full, with 149 percent of its normal mountain snowpack for the date still remaining, according to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Mary Mellema, senior hydrologist at the Bureau of Reclamation, said the agency would increase flows through Boise by 300 cubic feet per second per day this week to reach 9,500 cfs. Anything more than 7,000 cfs is considered flood stage. Mellema explained prolonged wet weather has prevented BOR from making the volume of releases prescribed by an Army Corps of Engineers formula, called a rule curve.

At 9,500 cfs, the agency expects much of the Boise Greenbelt to be under water, exacerbated erosion of banks, flooding of Eagle Island, Garden City, Star and Caldwell, water flowing into 45th and 47th streets in the warehouse district of Garden City, some residential property affected and flooding of Warm Springs Golf Course and Municipal Park in east Boise.

Ada County emergency management officials said they're reinforcing river banks and will have personnel on the lookout for debris that could accumulate at bridges and quickly raise water levels.

"There's been a lot of construction near the river since the last time we've had these kinds of flows," said Brian Sauer, bureau water operations manager for the Middle Snake Field Office. "It's a path we've never really been down."

Complicating matters, the extended forecast for Southern Idaho calls for heavy rainfall, though the arrival of lower temperatures should slow the snow melt, according to the National Weather Service.

Though the Boise system is "several hundred thousand acre-feet behind the rule curve," Mat Weaver, Idaho Department of Water Resources deputy director, said levels in the Upper Snake River system are right on target.

The Upper Snake Reservoir system was 65 percent full as of May 11. Palisades Reservoir was drained to just 12 percent of capacity in anticipation of peak runoff, with 162 percent of the system's average snowpack for the date still remaining.

Lynn Tominaga, executive director of Idaho Ground Water Appropriators Inc., said his irrigators worry BOR



John O'Connell/Capital Press File  
The Portneuf River, more than a foot above flood stage, overflows its banks April 26 in Sacajawea Park in Pocatello, Idaho. Other rivers across the state are running high as a record snowpack continues to melt and water managers deal with high volumes.

drained Palisades too far. IGWA directed its attorneys to write the agency a letter encouraging judiciousness in future releases.

Lately, Steve Howser, general manager of Aberdeen-Springfield Canal Co., has heard similar concerns daily about over-drafting from his shareholders. But he

recalls the 1997 season, when the Upper Snake had a similar snowpack and Palisades was left half full. That season, flood waters severely damaged his diversions. Howser is confident the system will still end this season filled to near capacity based on the extremely high river volumes and the remaining snowpack.

For example, the Snake River at the Shelley gage was at 22,221 cfs on May 11, compared with more typical flows for the date of just over 5,000 cfs.

The Snake River at Flag Ranch above Jackson Hole, Wyo., was flowing at 5,000 cfs. — five times the normal volume for mid-May, he said.

## With pinto prices up, dry bean acres in Idaho expected to increase

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

WILDER, Idaho — Dry bean acreage in Idaho is expected to increase in 2017, a development that seemed unlikely earlier this year.

Prices for pintos, the engine that pulls the bean price train, are averaging \$25-27 per hundredweight right now but had dipped into the teens in December, said Don Tolmie, production manager for Treasure Valley Seed. Co. in southwestern Idaho.

"If you had asked me (earlier in the year), I would have predicted dry bean acreage would be down substantially in the Treasure Valley area," he said. "But now I think acreage is going to be close to what it was last year or a bit above."

Recent sales increases in dry bean seed are a combination of the uptick in bean prices as well as low prices for other crops grown in the region, Tolmie said.

"Pinto prices are greatly improved over last year," he said. "As prices started picking up, people started changing their minds about dry bean seed. We're seeing sales similar to what we had last year in this valley."

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service estimates that dry bean acreage in Idaho, not including chickpeas, will total 55,000 in 2017, up from 48,000 last year and 50,000 in 2015.

Idaho's dry bean acreage is split between the Treasure Valley area of southwestern Idaho and the Magic Valley area of southcentral Idaho.

Dry bean planting is getting ready to kick into high gear in both areas.

Magic Valley grower Bill Bitzenburg expects dry bean acres to be up significantly this year, largely because of low prices for other crops planted in the region.

"Overall, beans are going to be up a lot in Idaho this year," he said. "Guys are looking for different options for things to plant."

Mike Goodson, a Treasure Valley farmer, is planting about 10 percent more beans than normal this year. That's partly because of normal rotational fluctuations but also because prices for wheat and many other crops are sub-par, he said.

"I think (beans) have more potential on the market right now versus (some other crops)," he said.

Idaho is the nation's leader in dry bean seed and about 70 percent of the state's bean acres are grown for seed.

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<p><b>JD 9860</b>, 2006, 2472 hours, small grain, 35% Rahco leveler, no platform.....<b>\$159,400</b> Tekoa 720722</p>	<p><b>JD 5660</b>, 2015, 197 hours, small grain, grass seed combine, no platform, 800-38 drive tires.....<b>\$363,700</b> Salem E0775100</p>	<p><b>JD 9760</b>, 2006, 2815 hours, small grain, 18% Rahco leveler, 4WD, 635F platform and cart.....<b>\$167,150</b> Tekoa OS715882</p>
<p><b>JD T670</b>, 2009, 1148 hours, small grain, conventional separator, grass seed combine.....<b>\$180,000</b> Donald OA084501</p>	<p><b>JD 5670</b>, 2014, 464 hours, small grain, Vari stream rotor, Powercast tailboard, 615P BPU platform.....<b>\$290,400</b> Merrill 765545</p>	<p><b>JD 5690</b>, 2014, 619 hours, small grain, 27% Hillco leveler, duals, 635F platform and cart.....<b>\$409,800</b> Walla Walla DO765123</p>
<p><b>JD 5680</b>, 2013, 881 hours, small grain, 35% Rahco leveler, 635F platform and cart, A/T ready.....<b>\$388,700</b> Four Lakes 755668</p>	<p><b>JD 9600</b>, 1995, 4821 hours, small grain, grass seed combine, 914W BPU, platform, straw chopper...<b>\$42,500</b> Tangent OX665740</p>	<p><b>JD 5680</b>, 2013, 1002 hours, small grain, 35% Rahco leveler, no platform.....<b>\$360,400</b> Colfax 755718</p>

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