

People & Places

Turning ideas into equipment

Jonathan Gobel builds implements to meet farmers' unique needs

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

WILLIAMS, Calif. — Jonathan Gobel was in his element. Some rice growers in the area needed a more efficient spray rig for their crops without causing pesticide drift onto nearby nut orchards, so he and his partners sat down at the computer.

They fashioned a sprayer with tracks instead of the steel wheels that are more common, enabling the grower to get into areas with soft soils. They made the arms wider so fewer passes in the field were needed, and made them adjustable so they could be lowered to just above the rice to avoid drift.

And they made it all happen fast.

"We started design on the sprayer in November and built it from the ground up," said Gobel, 39, himself a rice grower. "It typically takes three to five years to develop a sprayer like that. We started in November and had a rolling chassis in the (Colusa) Farm Show in February."

The sprayer — which was largely the brainchild of rice grower Randy Chrisman — was used this spring and early summer.

Design and build

Such projects are common at Gobel's 3-year-old business, Iron Tree Solutions. The firm specializes in developing and making parts and equipment to meet the unique needs of farmers.

For instance, the business developed a 24-foot swing-blade scraper used for level-



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Jonathan Gobel with a sprayer his company designed. Gobel designs and builds custom equipment to meet area farmers' needs.

ing fields. More than 40 of the swing blade units have been sold, he said.

Gobel is a native of the mid-valley, having grown up on a rice farm and graduated from Maxwell High School. A tinkerer all his life, he went to work out of high school at the Morning Star Packing Co. in Williams, where he helped develop a tomato harvester.

"I realized that I really enjoy providing that kind of a service for anybody who comes along with an idea," he said.

In 2010, Gobel purchased a stake in a manufacturing company in Oregon's Willamette Valley with more than 100 employees. A year later, he sold his share to his partner and moved home.

"When I owned the other business, it was basically a job shop and all I was doing was scheduling," he said. "It

was OK, but it was not really what I wanted to spend my time doing."

Gobel's Iron Tree Solutions has a research and development shop where he and designer Jeff Mingay draw custom-ordered parts with a computer program called Inventor, which uses three-dimensional imagery.

The shop makes parts with a waterjet cutter, a tool common in industries such as mining and aerospace which uses a high-pressure jet of water to cut steel and other materials.

When a new machine or part is designed, Iron Tree makes two or three of them to test in the field, then sends the computerized specifications to the Kansas-based Landoll Corp. to make more, Gobel said.

"They build it and ship it to us," he said. "It really

works well for us to keep our overhead low."

New sprayer

Historically, spray applications were made from the air, before the proliferation of nuts and other specialty crops and stricter air quality regulations made aerial applications problematic.

Chrisman, the Williams rice producer, has also sustained "terrible" losses of rice from steel wheels, and there was ground on which he couldn't go, he said. He decided to try tank-like tracks. He put them on a four-wheeler and it worked, so he had Gobel's business help him develop a sprayer.

About 1,000 acres of rice ground on the west side of the valley have soils that essentially "have no bottom," so sprayers with steel wheels get stuck, Gobel said. Growers

Western Innovator

Jonathan Gobel
Occupation: Rice grower and owner, Iron Tree Solutions
Age: 39
Residence: Willows, Calif.
Family: Wife Kirsten
Website: irontreesolutions.com

were left with no alternative but to spray from the air — until the new machines with tracks came along.

"This machine has done 600 acres in those conditions and done just fine," Gobel said.

The new sprayer also has a wider reach, with booms that measure 105 feet across. This enables growers to cover more ground in less time.

With other sprayers, "we could only do 30 acres of ground in an hour, so a 150-acre field would take us five hours," Chrisman said. "Now we can do it in three hours."

Chrisman said it's easy to bring new ideas to Gobel's company.

The quest to stay abreast of the latest advancements in technology takes Gobel to lots of trade shows, he said. But he has little desire to grow his company, he said.

"I don't want to get big," he said. "I don't want to be a huge conglomerate. I want to stay small. I want to be able to shift gears."

"We're a place where farmers can come to us and say, 'Build this,'" he said.

Total solar eclipse puts spotlight on rural Oregon town

By **GILLIAN FLACCUS**
Associated Press

MADRAS, Ore. (AP) — Just before sunrise, there's typically nothing atop Round Butte but the whistle of the wind and a panoramic view of Oregon's second-highest peak glowing pink in the faint light.

But on Aug. 21, local officials expect this lookout point just outside the small town of Madras to be crammed with people from around the world, all hoping for the first glimpse of the moon's shadow as it crosses Mount Jefferson's snow fields. Then, a solar eclipse will throw the entire region into complete darkness for two minutes.

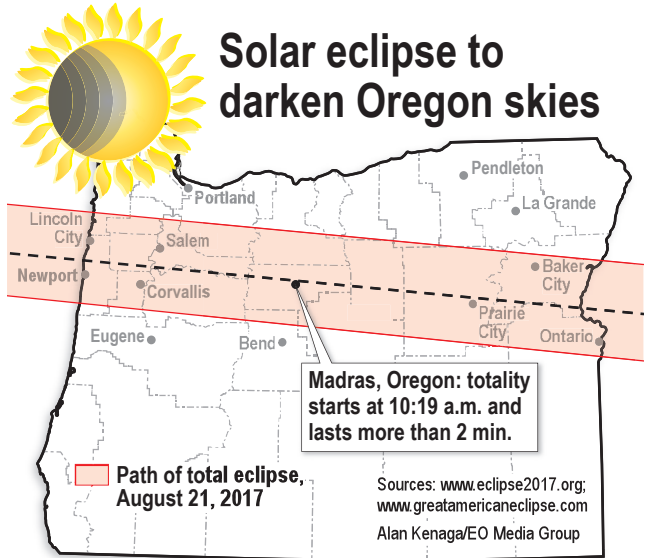
The first coast-to-coast total solar eclipse to cross the continental United States

in 99 years will first be visible in Oregon, and Madras is predicted to be among the country's best viewing spots because of its clear, high-desert skies, flat landscape and stunning mountain views.

Up to 1 million eclipse chasers will descend on Oregon for the celestial event, and officials are bracing for as many as 100,000 of them in and around Madras.

In this vast expanse of ranches and farms, rural, two-lane roads could mean traffic jams of cosmic proportions. Every hotel in Madras is booked, some residents are renting their homes for \$3,000 a night, and campers are expected to flood the national forests and grasslands during peak wildfire season.

The state's emergency coordination center will gear



up, and first responders will prepare to respond to any trouble as they would for an earthquake or other natural disaster. Cell towers could be overwhelmed, traffic will

be gridlocked, and police and fire stretched to the max managing the crowds.

"Bring extra water, bring food. You need to be prepared to be able to survive on

your own for 24 to 48 to 72 hours, just like you would in any sort of emergency," said Dave Thompson, spokesman for the Oregon Department of Transportation. "This is pretty much a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and it's really worth seeing. But you've got to be prepared or you won't enjoy it."

When the moon passes between the sun and the Earth, the path of totality — meaning total darkness — from the moon's shadow will begin on Oregon's coast, then cross the north-central part of the state from west to east.

But as the hype builds, authorities are increasingly worried that people who planned to watch from the notoriously foggy coast could move east at the last minute if the forecast sours.

Calendar *Sponsored by:* **OXARC GASES / WELDING / SAFETY / FIRE**

To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on "Submit an Event." Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301 or emailed to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

Through Saturday, July 1

128th Annual Washington State Grange Convention. Ocean Shores Convention Center, 120 W. Chance a La Mer NW, Ocean Shores, Wash.

Friday, June 30

Farm Practices to Support Beneficial Insects. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Day 2 of this two-day class will offer a tour of the Wandering Fields farm in the Applegate area. Participants will practice identifying beneficials and observe how a blend of hedgerows, cover crops, flowering seed crops and native plants creates a system of biological pest management. Participation on Day 1 on June 9 is a requirement to attend the tour. Cost: \$15 one/\$25 two from the same farm. Website: <http://bit.ly/JacksonSmallFarmDream>.

Bark Beetle Field Day. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. University of Idaho Extension

Kootenai County office, 1808 N. Third St., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Participants will get first-hand exposure to major bark beetles' biology and research into controlling bark beetles. Pre-register by June 23. Cost: \$20 (\$22 with a credit card at www.uidaho.edu/BarkBeetle) Website: www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry

Friday-Tuesday, June 30-July 4

St. Paul Rodeo. Rodeo Arena, 20045 Fourth St. NE, St. Paul, Ore. The St. Paul Rodeo will continue to bring a slice of the old West to the north Willamette Valley. Information: (503) 633-2011, tickets@stpaulrodeo.com, Website: <http://www.stpaulrodeo.com/>

Saturday-Tuesday, July 1-4

Molalla Buckaroo Rodeo, 815 Shirley St., Molalla, Ore. The Molalla Buckaroo Rodeo has been an Oregon tradition since September 1913. 503-829-8388. Website: <http://www.molallabuckaroo.com/>

Eugene Pro Rodeo. 4 p.m. to midnight on July 1-3, 7:30 to 10 p.m. July 4. Eugene Rodeo Grounds. 90751 Prairie Road, Eugene, Ore. Fireworks each night. Website: <http://www.eugeneprorodeo.com/>

Thursday-Sunday, July 6-9

Marion County Fair. Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, Ore. Website: <http://www.co.marion.or.us/CS/Fair>

Friday-Saturday, July 7-8

2nd Annual Prineville Truck and Tractor Pull. 7 p.m. Friday, 4 p.m. Saturday. Crook County Fairgrounds, 1280 Main St., Prineville, Ore. Website: www.crookcountyfairgrounds.com

Idaho State Ram Sale. Twin Falls County Fair Grounds, 215 Fair Ave., Filer, Idaho. The "Suffolk Show of the West" begins at 6 p.m. Friday and continues at 10:30 a.m. Saturday. For more information, call 208-344-2271 or email idahowool@gmail.com Website: idahowool.org

Wednesday, July 12

Blueberry Field Day. 1-5 p.m. North Willamette Research and Extension Center, 15210 NE Mileway Road, Aurora, Ore. Find out about the latest research in blueberries. <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/NWREC/>

Friday, July 14
Ag One Community Salute. 6-9

p.m. Fresno Convention Center Exhibit Hall, 700 M St., Fresno, Calif. The event's 18th edition is the first to honor a family and will spotlight third-generation member Tina Borba and her sons, Ross Jr. and Mark, as well as Mark's wife Peggy Brown-Borba. Proceeds will benefit the Ag One Ross Borba Sr. Family Endowment established in 1990, which supports deserving Fresno State students pursuing Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology degrees. Website: <http://bit.ly/2qLfdLD>

Friday, July 14-Sunday, July 30

California State Fair. 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Cal Expo Center, 1600 Exposition Blvd., Sacramento, Calif. Website: www.castatefair.org/

Saturday, July 15

Washington State Sheep Producers Ram and Ewe Sale. 1:30-6 p.m. Grant County Fairgrounds, 3953 Airway Drive NE, Moses Lake, Wash. For questions, call 509-200-2112. Email: wssp@gmx.com

Farm to Table Dinner and Auction. 5:30-9 p.m. Oregon Garden, 879 W. Main St., Silverton, Ore. Guests to this event will savor the flavors of the season with food donated from local farmers picked at the peak of

ripeness and prepared by Chef Daryl Gossack at Loustic Catering. Tickets are on sale now at our website or by phone. Through June 17 tickets are \$85 per and \$95 after June 18. The event is presented by Bonaventure Senior Living and all proceeds will feed people in our community through Marion-Polk Food Share. Website: <http://bit.ly/2qth9a1>

Saturday-Sunday, July 29-30

47th Annual Great Oregon Steam-Up. 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Powerland Heritage Park, 3995 Brooklake Road NE, Brooks, Ore. Packed with vintage power, this annual event celebrates the steam power, machines and people who drove Oregon agriculture, logging, transportation and more from the 1800s through early 1900s. Get up close to the team-power farm machinery, vintage trucks, antique cars, logging gear and a working steam sawmill. Kids of all ages will enjoy train and trolley rides, daily parade, huge flea market, traditional tractor pulling, machinery demos, threshing and quilt show. This year the featured makes are Aultman-Taylor and Rumely. General admission \$12, children under 12 are free. Website: <http://www.antique-powerland.com/html/steam-up.html>

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Clarification

In a June 16 story about rattlesnakes, an expert recommended elevating a snake bite above the victim's heart. However, the Mayo Clinic advises positioning the bite at or below the level of the heart.

In any case, seeking prompt medical care should be a priority, the experts agree.

Correction policy

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We want to publish corrections to set the record straight.