

# Farmers, ODA clear air for eclipse viewers

Growers agree not to burn fields around the eclipse

By ALIYA HALL  
Capital Press

With hundreds of thousands of eclipse watchers converging on Oregon's Willamette Valley on Aug. 21, grass seed growers and the state Department of Agriculture have agreed to do their part in keeping the air clear.

To keep from obscuring the view of the rare phenomenon and avoid possible impacts on traffic, farmers have agreed not to burn their fields either the weekend before the eclipse or on Monday, Aug. 21, said John Byers, manager of the Oregon Department of Agriculture Smoke Management Program.

Burning is also "not expected to be occurring on Tuesday, Aug. 22," Byers said in an email.

"We will monitor burning conditions on the 22nd; it will be an option, but monitored closely to make sure any traffic issues won't be a problem," said Roger Beyer, executive director of Oregon Seed Council.

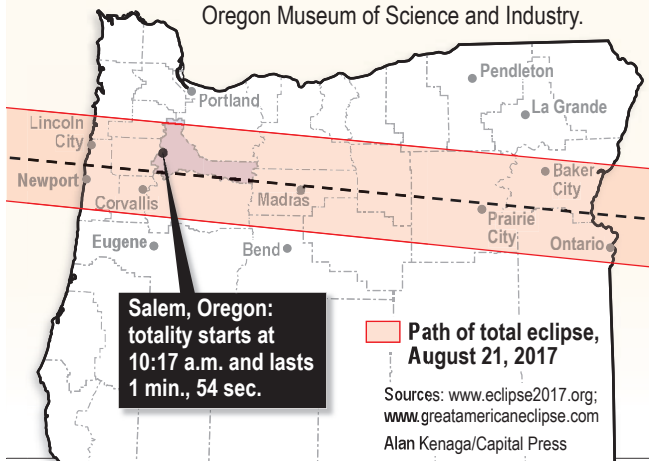
The decision was reached at the most recent meeting between the Seed Council and ODA smoke management officials.

According to Beyer, there was unanimous agreement between the growers and ODA not to burn.

Field burning helps farmers rid their fields of weeds, pests and debris without using chemicals. It is allowed only in certain parts of the valley, mainly in the eastern hills of

## Farmers won't burn during eclipse

Willamette Valley farmers that normally do so have agreed not to burn their fields during the total solar eclipse. About 1 million visitors are expected statewide for the event, according to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry.



Marion County. Some is also allowed in Clackamas and Linn counties, according to a state Department of Environmental Quality fact sheet. Farmers must obtain a permit from ODA to burn their fields. The no-burn decision is

good news for Daniel Adamo, an Oregon astrodynamics consultant who initially had concerns about how the field burning might obscure the view of the eclipse from the valley.

"Although the sun will be about 40 degrees above the east-southeast horizon during total eclipse, its extended atmosphere can easily be masked from view by thin clouds, smoke from forest fires or agricultural activity," Adamo said. "Particularly at risk from smoke obscuration are lower elevations such as the Willamette Valley floor."

Oregonians will have the first opportunity to witness the event because the path of the eclipse is expected to run from west to east and about 62 miles wide through Salem and Albany.

A total eclipse won't hap-

pen again in this region for 601 years.

According to Adamo, the eclipse will start at 10:17 a.m. Pacific time at the Oregon Coast. Its path will cross a huge swath of the continental U.S.

The eclipse will attract groups from Japan, Germany and Australia in addition to watchers from neighboring states, according to Maricela Guerrero, Travel Salem destination development manager. Hotels are at 95 percent capacity for the weekend, she said.

While the exact number of people expected to visit for the eclipse is unknown, Guerrero said that the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry is estimating about 1 million statewide, increasing the state's population by about 25 percent.

# U.S. apple crop forecast up slightly

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

The first forecast of this fall's U.S. apple crop is up just 2 percent from the 2016 crop which should be manageable, according to a top Michigan apple producer.

Total U.S. fresh and processed production was estimated at 255.6 million, 42-pound boxes at the Premier Apple Cooperative meeting in Syracuse, N.Y., June 27.

The USDA adjusted figure for 2016 is 249.7 million boxes and the large 2014 crop was 272.2 million boxes while the record was 277.3 million in 1998.

"Overall this crop is pretty manageable. If our size profiles match up with what customers want, it will be manageable," said Don Armock, president of Riveridge Produce, Sparta, Mich., who attended the New York meeting.

Last year, Washington state, the national leader, had larger fruit than it likes to have while Michigan and New York had smaller fruit than they like, Armock said.

Large fruit and a strong dollar compared with foreign currency held down Washington apples exports, he said.

Quality, largely driven by weather, is a big unknown factor, at this point, in marketing the 2017 crop, he said.

Mark Seetin, director of regulatory and industry affairs of the U.S. Apple Association, Vienna, Va., said more than 140 industry members from all major apple producing regions of the country discussed 2017 crop prospects at the Premier meeting. It's the first national estimate that will be updated at U.S. Apple Association's Outlook conference in Chicago, Aug. 24-25.

The Michigan Frozen Food Packers Association usually conducts its annual Fruit Crop Guesstimate prior to the Premier meeting but did not do so this year. The Washington State Tree Fruit Association will forecast the Washington crop in early August.

Of the 255.6 million box Premier estimate: Washing-



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

A crew prunes Kanzi apple trees in Mountain View Orchard, East Wenatchee, Wash., May 25. The 2017 national apple crop is estimated up 2 percent from 2016.

ton is 165 million, up 5 percent; New York, 29 million, up 13.7 percent; Michigan, 20 million, down 30 percent; Pennsylvania, 12 million, up 2.9 percent; California, 5.5 million, up 10 percent; and Virginia, 5.2 million, up 19.2 percent.

Oregon is 4.2 million, up 6.9 percent and Idaho is 1.5 million, up 5 percent.

USDA adjusted, but not final, figures for 2016, show Michigan surpassing New York for the first time for the No. 2 spot at 28.5 million boxes compared with New York's 25.5 million.

However, Armock said neither state had a full crop in 2016 and if they did, New York would still lead.

Neither state will have full crops in 2017, he said, as Western New York is down 25 percent from poor pollination. May 8 and 9 frosts in Michigan cut the crop in half in the southern part of the state along Lake Michigan, he said. The northern region along the lake is light to full and the vast majority of the fresh crop in the Ridge country to Belding is 75 to 80 percent of full, he said.

"Damage is variety and location specific with Gala and Honeycrisp in relatively good shape and McIntosh, Jonagold and Fuji taking harder hits," Armock said.

There has been significant frost damage to the 2017 apple crop in Europe, particularly Poland and Italy which are leading apple exporters, Armock said. That makes the U.S. more competitive in exports to the Middle East, he said.

# UI reports light potato psyllid pressure

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

KIMBERLY, Idaho — Pressure from the tiny, winged insects that spread zebra chip disease in potatoes has been light this season, emboldening some Idaho farmers to scale back on their pesticide programs.

Zebra chip, which is caused by the Liberibacter bacterium and spread by potato psyllids, first arrived in the Pacific Northwest in 2011. The disease creates bands in tuber flesh that darken during frying, rendering spuds unmarketable.

University of Idaho Extension entomologist Erik Wenninger, who runs an extensive field monitoring program to gauge psyllid populations, said the first psyllid of this season was captured in late May — about the same timing as last season. However, a single psyllid, captured at UI's Kimberly Research and Extension Center, has tested positive for Liberibacter this season.

Furthermore, Wenninger said, the scouting network, which includes yellow sticky traps surrounding 96 potato fields throughout the state, has captured five to seven psyllids per week, compared with more than 50 psyllids per week last season.

Wenninger said zebra chip was found in a few fields last season, but the incidence of the disease was relatively low, especially given the high psyllid densities.

"We had a lot more psyllids at this time last year," said Wenninger, who has also noticed lighter pressure from



Submitted by Oregon State University

Potato psyllids, like the insect pictured above, can spread the Liberibacter bacterium that causes zebra chip disease in potatoes. Some Idaho farmers are saving a bit of money on insecticidal sprays due to light potato psyllid pressure.

aphids and Colorado potato beetles.

Wilder grower Doug Gross estimates he spent \$230 per acre spraying insecticides to protect his crops last season. Based on the light pressure from both psyllids and aphids this season, he's already skipped two insecticidal sprays that he'd made by this time last season.

"As a cost-saving measure, we are cutting back our insecticide program," Gross said. "We will still start spraying at some point in time when we reach a threshold, especially if we see any (Liberibacter) positive psyllids."

Declo grower Mark Darrington acknowledges psyllid pressure is down, but

he's continued with his usual spraying program, believing it would be too risky to scale back. Darrington said early season sprays are more affordable because they can be mixed in the same tank as fungicides, he can use chemicals that are prohibited as harvest approaches and he doesn't have to switch to products that might cost more to avoid chemical resistance.

"Later in the season, if they're not finding enough hot psyllids, I won't make additional sprays of the more expensive products," Darrington said.

Jeff Miller, with Rupert-based Miller Research, recently captured a psyllid on a sticky trap near a research field, but it didn't test positive for zebra chip. He's prolonged spraying insecticides on fields in which he used an insecticidal seed treatment at planting.

"I think you would be wise to wait (on applying insecticides), and part of that is driven by the economy," Miller said. "I don't think it's time to worry about zebra chip just yet. Keep watching the results (of the monitoring program) and see what we find."

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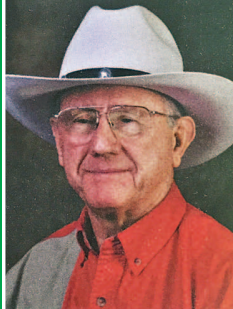
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