

People & Places

Specialist tracks hazelnut industry

Mike McDaniel uses aerial imagery, field visits to gauge growth

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

As hazelnut orchards proliferate across Western Oregon, geographic information system expert Mike McDaniel uses a bird's-eye view to monitor their progress.

McDaniel is constantly scouring aerial photographs taken by USDA and commercial image providers to detect where new trees are being planted and where old ones are being removed.

Over the past several years, he's documented a surge in hazelnut acreage — up roughly 60 percent, to nearly 60,700 acres, between 2012 and 2016.

"I don't think it can maintain that pace forever, but there's plenty of room to grow if the market can support it," said McDaniel.

Pacific Agricultural Survey, McDaniel's company, is contracted by the Oregon Hazelnut Marketing Board to track the industry's growth and anticipate future crop supplies.

"The industry infrastructure has to be ready to handle new product as it comes online," said Polly Owen, the board's manager.

Fueled by strong prices, healthy Chinese demand and disease-resistant varieties, the hazelnut industry is rushing to take advantage of the fortuitous circumstances.

Tracking growth

With each passing year that McDaniel collects data about hazelnut orchards, the industry will develop a deeper, more refined understanding of the state of affairs, Owen said.

"As we move along, it will help more and more," she said.

When McDaniel began his



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Geographic information system specialist Mike McDaniel stands near a hazelnut orchard in Oregon's Willamette Valley. McDaniel uses aerial imagery to track the industry's surging growth.

venture in 2012, he expected to see large blocks of old orchards suffering from eastern filbert blight to be replaced with new EFB-resistant cultivars.

So far, though, that isn't happening on a large scale.

Instead, growers are planting new orchards in fields traditionally devoted to grass seed and field crops while maintaining their old trees with pruning and fungicides.

"They've been doing everything they can to drag them along as long as prices are high," McDaniel said.

To supplement the aerial images, he also takes field trips to inspect on-the-ground conditions. These visits are necessary to learn facts that aren't readily visible from the air, such as how badly older trees are infected with blight.

"You can't expect the same volume from them year after year if they're struggling," he said.

Farmers are often opting to plant new orchards in phases over several years, which McDaniel attributes to a limited number of seedling trees and a desire to preserve capital.

"They'll go in small chunks to slowly plant a new area," he said.

Rather than invest all at once in a large orchard, many prefer to plant this year's trees with last year's profits.

That's not to say there aren't any huge plantings going in, McDaniel said. "Every year, you see something really impressive."

Fighting for space

Growers are also eager to fit hazelnut trees wherever they have suitable ground available, even odd locations like the corners of a field irrigated by a center pivot.

"People are finding all kinds of nooks and crannies to cram a few trees in," he said.

The northern part of the Willamette Valley has the greatest proportion of high-quality soils suitable for hazelnut orchards, but other uses compete for that acreage.

"You're fighting for space with urban growth," he said. "Each year there is less good land available."

The southern valley, on the other hand, has poorer growing conditions but more

room to grow.

Experienced hazelnut farmers are seizing on these fields and improving them with soil amendments and drainage improvements.

"They have a lot more space to devote to new orchards," McDaniel said.

New blight-resistant trees developed by Oregon State University, such as the popular Jefferson cultivar, are more compact than other varieties, allowing growers to pack more of them into an acre.

Little is known about how the novel trees will perform upon reaching full maturity, which is why it's important to observe yields as they grow.

"They basically want to know what they will be faced with in the next few years," McDaniel said. "The key is to fill in the blanks on how those varieties are going to behave."

More experiments

With the industry undergoing a revitalization, McDaniel has also noticed farmers are more willing to experiment with different tree spacings and orchard geometry.



Western Innovator

Mike McDaniel

Occupation: Geographic information system specialist

Hometown: McMinnville, Ore.

Education: Bachelor's degree in geography from Portland State University in 2000, master's degree in geography from Syracuse University in 2003

Age: 39

Previous work experience: Mapping infrastructure for the Portland Bureau of Transportation, analyzing satellite imagery of forest fires for the Sanborn Map Co., conducting a nationwide land use survey for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service

The traditional rules for planting stalwart cultivars, such as Barcelona, aren't seen as set in stone, he said. "All of that is really going out the window."

McDaniel's introduction to the hazelnut industry came when he was a youngster, helping out on his aunt and uncle's orchard. Later, while attending college, he became fascinated with geography.

"It tracks so many different parts of life, everything from economics to politics," McDaniel said. "People fight wars over boundaries. Lines on a map have mattered since early human history."

While his current work fortunately isn't likely to inspire violent conflict, McDaniel is gratified by the potential to help the hazelnut industry shape its future.

"There's a lot of planning to be done," he said.

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To Reach Us

Circulation..... 800-882-6789
Email..... Circulation@capitalpress.com
Main line..... 503-364-4431
Fax 503-370-4383
Advertising Fax 503-364-2692

News Staff

Northern California
Tim Hearnden 530-605-3072

Eastern Idaho

John O'Connell 208-421-4347

Idaho

Carol Ryan Dumas 208-860-3898

Boise

Sean Ellis 208-914-8264

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Eric Mortenson 503-412-8846

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New Washington state dairy ambassadors selected

ARLINGTON, Wash. — Anna Teachman, representing King and Pierce counties, is the 2017-2018 Washington state dairy ambassador.

She is the daughter of Michael and Lorilyn Teachman of SeaTac, Wash., and was one of three finalists at the 62nd Annual Washington State Dairy Ambassador Coronation on June 24 at the Byrnes Performing Arts Center in Arlington.

The new 2017-2018 Washington state alternate dairy ambassadors are Juliana LeClair, representing Skagit County, the daughter of Joe and Annette LeClair of Mount Vernon, Wash., and Claire

Leininger, representing Whatcom County, the daughter of Erik and Paula Leininger of Everson, Wash.

"I am so excited to be representing the hard-working dairy farmers of Washington for this year," Teachman said in a press release. "Thank you, dairy farmers, for this opportunity!"

As representatives of the Dairy Farmers of Washington, the state dairy ambassador and alternates will visit schools, attend local and state fairs, appear at Washington Interscholastic Activities Association events and many more activities including addressing the Washington State Legislature

promoting the health and nutrition benefits of dairy products.

The new ambassador and her alternates take over from 2016-2017 Washington State Dairy Ambassador Alicia Smaciarz, the daughter of Terry and Lana Smaciarz of Raymond, and Alternate State Dairy Ambassadors Jana Plagerman, the daughter of Leroy and Rhonda Plagerman of Lynden, and Tiana Peterson, daughter of Tom and Bianca Peterson of Graham.

They traveled around the state educating students, parents and others on the positive impact and value of Washington's dairy industry and the importance of dairy products.



Courtesy of the Dairy Farmers of Washington

Left to right are Juliana LeClair, alternate ambassador; Anna Teachman, Washington state dairy ambassador; and Claire Leininger, alternate ambassador.

Calendar

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20 Northwest Locations

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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.

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.crookcounty-fairgrounds.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

Saturday, July 8

Great White Wine Festival. Noon-7:30 p.m. Left Coast Cellars, 4225 N. Pacific Highway W, Rickreall, Ore. Join us for the first Great White Wine Festival. Top Willamette wineries will showcase some of the valley's most interesting white wines. Unique tasting stations will be spread across the grounds. Spe-

cially crafted food stations will serve menu items created to pair with the featured wines. Yard games and carnival games will be accompanied by a variety of live music. \$25 general admission includes 7 drink tickets, 3 game tickets and a souvenir GoVino glass. \$15 admission for club members of all participating wineries. Children 10 and under are free. People aged 11-20, designated drivers and non-drinkers are admitted for \$10. Website: http://leftcoastcellars.com/

Wednesday, July 12

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

Manure and Compost Application Workshop. 1-5 p.m., Swager Farms Dairy, 1749 East 3800 North, Buhl, Idaho. Cost: Free.

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

Tuesday, July 25

Dairy Sheep and Goat Workshop. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Gooding County Fairgrounds, 203 Lucy Lane, Gooding, Idaho. University of Idaho Extension workshop. Lunch included. The workshop is \$30 with pre-registration until July 21 and \$40 after that.

Friday, July 28

Forest Insect and Disease Field Day. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Benawah County Fairgrounds, 2330-2398 St. Maries Ave., St. Maries, Idaho. The event will give participants firsthand exposure to a wide range of organisms that impair the growth of trees and forests in Northern Idaho including: Douglas-fir beetle and other bark beetles; Armillaria and other root diseases; white pine blister rust; indian paint fungus, pini rot and other stem decays; and dwarf mistletoes. Experts will help participants identify insect and disease symptoms and discuss practical long- and short-term methods of dealing with them. Those wishing to participate should pre-register at the University of Idaho Extension Office in Benawah County by July 21. A \$10 registration fee covers resource materials and refreshments.

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 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

Tuesday-Friday, Aug. 1-4

7th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture. Rosario, Argentina. A world meeting presented by the American Confederation of Farmers Organizations for a Sustainable Agriculture, which began with associations of farmers that promoted the no till system and are currently working to promote sustainable production systems. Website: http://congresoaaapresid.org.ar/