

Ex-EPA official linked to 'What's Upstream' to stay in Puget Sound post

McLerran pleased; farm group not

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Former Environmental Protection Agency regional director Dennis McLerran will stay on the Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council, a position that had appeared in jeopardy because of his link to the What's Upstream campaign to restrict farming in Washington.

The Senate environment committee on June 29 adjourned what's likely to be its final meeting this session without forwarding McLerran's appointment to the Senate floor, where he could have been ousted if a majority opposed his confirmation.

McLerran can serve indefinitely in the unpaid post if the Senate doesn't act.

"I'm pleased I'll be able to serve on the leadership," McLerran said Monday. "I clearly have a passion for the recovery of the Puget Sound and have a lot of experience to bring to that."

McLerran was Region 10 director as the Swinomish Indian tribe between 2011 and 2016 spent nearly \$500,000 from an EPA grant on What's Upstream, a media campaign that portrayed farmers as unregulated polluters.

His appointment by Gov. Jay Inslee to advise the agency that oversees Puget Sound restoration was opposed by Save Family Farming, which was formed to respond to claims by What's Upstream.

"We're disappointed with the governor's actions certainly and disappointed it didn't come to a Senate vote," the group's director, Gerald Baron, said. "This appointment has put us on notice to be watching carefully the actions of the Puget Sound Partnership."

McLerran was grilled about What's Upstream June 14 by the Senate environment committee in a confirmation hearing. McLerran said the campaign was too harsh to-



Courtesy Environmental Protection Agency

Former Environmental Protection Agency Northwest Administrator Dennis McLerran stands on a beach in Seattle during a 2015 Earth Day cleanup. A state Senate committee has decided to allow him to stay on the Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council.

ward farmers, but declined to outright condemn it.

The hearing was unusual. None of the other six members on the leadership council, appointed over the past several years, have been subjected to a hearing. McLerran was summoned soon after he was appointed.

The chairman of the environment committee, Ferndale Republican Doug Ericksen, denied that he singled out McLerran because of What's Upstream. Ericksen said that he didn't realize the other members of the council had not been called for a confirmation hearing.

He deflected questions about why the committee didn't forward McLerran's appointment for a vote by the full Senate and didn't rule out taking up the issue again. "There's no rush to it," he said.

The Republican-led committee lacked one vote to force a floor vote, according to a person familiar with the matter.

McLerran was appointed to fill the final year of an unexpired four-year term. McLerran said he would be willing to be on the council beyond the one year.

"If the governor asked me to serve again, I certain-

ly would," he said. "I'd very much like to have a positive and collaborative relationship with agriculture."

What's Upstream culminated in 2016 with a media blitz to influence state legislators to impose mandatory buffers between fields and waterways. The effort collapsed that spring when some federal lawmakers took note and denounced the campaign as a malicious attack on agriculture.

According to EPA records, McLerran met tribal officials in 2015, assuring them he didn't see the campaign as a legal issue but also urging them to tone down the campaign's attacks on agriculture.

Subsequently, the tribe, in partnership with several environmental groups, intensified its criticism of farming through a revamped website and letter-writing campaign to state lawmakers.

"I think I did everything possible to change the tone and the nature of the campaign," McLerran said.

The EPA's inspector general found that What's Upstream was a proper use of an EPA grant, dismissing allegations by some federal lawmakers that it was illegal lobbying funded by taxpayers.

Analyst sees positive signs for the U.S. sugar market

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

NAMPA, Idaho — U.S. sugar beet growers are poised for a profitable year despite expectations of a large global sugar crop, market analysts with Rabobank predict.

A new report from the Rabobank Food & Agribusiness Research and Advisory Group estimates the world's sugar growers will overproduce by 2.7 million metric tons in the current crop year.

But U.S. sugar prices should avoid downward pressure from the expected international glut, thanks largely to a recently renegotiated agreement addressing the dumping of subsidized Mexican sugar into the country, explained RaboResearch sugar analyst Stephen Nicholson.

Nicholson said the outlook is for increased production in major sugar-producing countries — including Brazil, India and Thailand.

Domestically, however, USDA estimates U.S. sugar farmers cut their beet acres by 2.7 percent and their cane acres by 3.4 percent. Adverse growing conditions in U.S. sugar production areas should also reduce sugar output, Nicholson said. He said the weather has been especially dry in Minnesota, Montana and the Dakotas, and a turn to humid weather could raise disease pressure.

Duane Grant, chairman of



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Sugar beets grow in American Falls, Idaho. Experts say beet growers in the U.S. should enjoy stable prices, thanks to a recently renegotiated agreement with Mexico, despite an expected global glut of sugar.

the board with Idaho-based Snake River Sugar Cooperative, said his company's growers planted late in Vale, Ore., Weiser, Idaho, and pockets of the Magic Valley, due to heavy snowpack and storms.

"Probably 10 to 15 percent of the company's fields were planted in challenging conditions," Grant said, adding delayed planting also affects how plants take up nitrogen and produce sugar content. "We're probably not looking at record yields, but I think it will be a decent crop."

Pest pressure could also pose challenges for growers in Idaho's Treasure Valley, where Amalgamated crop consultant Kevin Fouldger has reported finding loopers, armyworms and false celery leafhopper.

Nicholson said there's also

been a recent narrowing of a price gap that developed in the U.S. between sugar cane and sugar beets, which some buyers have avoided because most of the crop comes from seed produced with biotechnology.

The five-year average ending with the 2016 crop year shows a 0.3 percent reduction in beet sugar deliveries for human use and a 3.1 percent increase in cane deliveries, Nicholson said. More recently, he said beet sugar got cheap enough that buyers purchased most of the remaining 2016 crop inventories from beet processing companies. Furthermore, prices have risen about 1.5 cents since the early June updated agreement with Mexico, now at 32 cents per pound for refined beet sugar delivered to the Midwest.

Yakima reservoirs stay fuller longer

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

YAKIMA, Wash. — Five mountain reservoirs that provide summer irrigation to hundreds of thousands of acres of Yakima Basin farmland fell two days short of remaining full into July.

They've only reached July 11 of the last 37 years, says Chris Lynch, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation hydrologist in Yakima.

It's called the "storage control date," when reservoir outflows are greater than inflows to the point that drawdowns start.

Most years, that happens in June, seldom in May or July and only a very few times has it been in April or August, Lynch said.

Dates are later in years of water abundance from good snowpack and later mountain

runoff. Dates are earlier in drought years.

The most recent late dates were July 23, 2011, and July 15, 2012, Lynch said.

Being on the later side of normal, this year's storage control date of June 29, from a good winter snowpack and cool, wet spring increases the chance of more water carryover in storage heading into winter.

However, Lynch said, it looks like hot weather is in the forecast for the next couple of weeks. Highs will be in the 90s and 100s in the lowlands of the Yakima Basin and that will work against a large carryover.

"Hopefully, the hot streak won't last a whole month. That would cut into our carryover, but we have enough water in the reservoirs to cover that and even two months of unbroken heat," he said.

The five reservoirs —

Keechelus, Kachess, Cle Elum, Bumping and Rimrock — have a total capacity of 1,065,400 acre-feet. As of the Fourth of July, they were at 1,042,232 acre-feet, which was 98 percent of capacity.

The irrigation districts, providing water from the reservoirs to 464,000 acres, most of it farmland, have been using 104 percent of normal amounts daily for about a week, but averaged 95 percent of normal in June and 79 percent of normal since March 1, Lynch said.

Two years ago in the last drought, the storage control date was April 15, tying the same date of 1981. But the early record was April 1 in the drought year of 1977, he said. The only other April date was in 1986.

The record late date was Aug. 17, 1972, a wet year. August dates also occurred in 1933, 1955, 1971 and 1974.

Spud growers encouraged by acreage reports

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

EAGLE, Idaho — Idaho potato growers are optimistic that their down market may turn around in 2017 following the recent release of estimates showing a significant decrease in the state's planted spud acreage.

Idaho growers planted 310,000 acres of spuds this season, down from 325,000 acres last season, according to a report released June 30 by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Another recent estimate released by United Potato Growers of Idaho, compiled by personnel who visited each

potato field for better accuracy, placed the state's crop at 307,000 acres, down from 322,000 acres.

The NASS report also shows a decrease in total U.S. fall acres, estimated at about 908,000 acres, down from about 921,000 acres. NASS estimated the No. 2 potato state, Washington, kept its potato acreage flat, at 170,000 acres. Oregon's 38,000 planted acres were down 1,000 acres from last season, and California planted 1,400 fewer acres, with a total fall crop of 6,500 acres.

Though Idaho's fresh shipments have been well ahead of the previous year's pace, grower returns from a bumper 2016 crop have remained poor.

"I was there with all of the potato guys when they got the news from Idaho. Everybody was pretty excited," said Idaho Potato Commissioner Randy Hardy, an Oakley fresh grower who attended the recent National Potato Council summer meeting in Denver.

Hardy, who heads Sun Valley Potatoes Inc., said the 18 fresh growers who supply his company cut their potato acres by about 6 percent. In his area, he's seen a shift toward more dry beans and alfalfa.

"Anything down was probably good news, but I don't think anybody thought it would be down this far," Hardy said.

Hearing date: July 25, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. Location: Oregon Department of Agriculture, Hearings Room, 635 Capitol St NE, Salem, OR. Last day for public comment is August 11, 2017.

27-2#4



TIMOREX GOLD®
THE NEW GENERATION OF BIOFUNGICIDES

Introducing Timorex Gold® fungicide for control of the most common fungal and bacterial diseases in specialty fruit and vegetable crops. Flexible enough to use early in the season to keep disease pressures low and late in the season thanks to its short PHI and REI, Timorex Gold keeps you in charge of your disease control program. And, with Timorex Gold's unique mode of action and FRAC code, it is the ideal tank-mix and rotational partner. Add Timorex Gold fungicide to your spray program this season and reap the harvest of your good choices.

Ask for Timorex Gold at your local
Simplot Grower Solutions dealer!

Simplot
GROWER SOLUTIONS

Broad Spectrum Activity
Against Plant Pathogens

- No Residue Restrictions
- Non-toxic to Bees and Beneficials
- Excellent Resistance Management Tool
- Unique Mode of Action



www.timorexgold.com