

OSU research, extension to lose 17 positions

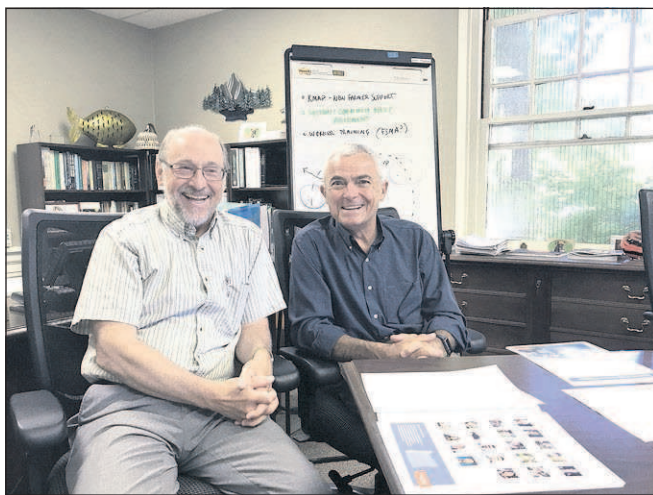
Reduction will likely be achieved through retirements, job changes

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Oregon State University's agricultural research and extension programs stand to lose the equivalent of 17 positions under a budget recently approved by state lawmakers.

However, the outlook is much improved from earlier this year, when a budget proposed by Gov. Kate Brown would have resulted in an even sharper reduction of research and extension positions, according to university leaders.

The Legislature approved a 4.7 percent increase, to \$66



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press
Dan Arp, left, dean of Oregon State University's College of Agricultural Sciences, speaks with Scott Reed, director of OSU's Extension Service, about state funding for the programs.

million, for OSU's agricultural experiment stations and a 4.6 percent increase, to \$47.7 million, for the OSU Extension Service in the 2017-2019 biennium.

Due to the increasing cost

of salaries and benefits, though, each program would need an increase of 7.9 percent just to maintain current service levels.

The equivalent of 17 positions must be cut due to the funding gap, but the university

doesn't expect to lay off researchers or extension agents. Rather, positions will be left vacant as people retire or change jobs, said Dan Arp, dean of the OSU College of Agricultural Sciences.

"We will be able to manage this with the normal attrition," Arp said.

In early 2017, when the state government was facing a \$1.8 billion budget shortfall, Brown recommended keeping OSU's agricultural research and extension budgets flat.

Under that scenario, OSU would have probably been forced to lay people off, said Arp. "It would have been difficult to manage that by attrition alone."

In OSU's 2015-2017 budget, the agricultural research and extension programs received a hefty funding boost that allowed for hiring new faculty dedicated to several priorities: working landscapes,

water, value-added products, workforce development and food safety.

Those "priority" researchers and extension agents won't be affected by the reduction in positions, said Scott Reed, director of OSU's Extension Service.

"This is not a last in, first out budget management thing," Reed said.

Losing the equivalent of 17 positions is nonetheless a hindrance for OSU, particularly since researchers bring in additional money from grants, said Arp.

"Fewer positions, fewer people out there leveraging dollars," he said.

Similarly, as there are fewer extension agents, those who remain employed by OSU must cover larger service areas and are spread more thinly across the state, said Reed.

Fortunately, voters in 26 counties have approved tax

districts that raise funds for extension through modest property tax increases, he said. "That's because of the support of the citizens of the state."

In the 2017 legislative session, OSU also secured the authority to sell \$9 million in bonds to help pay for a new 27,000-square-foot Fermentation Sciences and Research Center on the edge of its campus in Corvallis.

The university can only sell those bonds once it raises a matching \$9 million in matching funds.

The Tillamook County Creamery Association has already pledged \$1.5 million to the new building, which will feature dairy, wine and beer fermentation plants as well as joint cold storage and retail facilities.

Construction of the center is expected to begin within a year and a half.

Feds' assurances on Puget Sound tribe's reach pleases farm group

Tribe leader: No reason for alarm

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

A Washington farm group says it's relieved federal officials have made clear that a north Puget Sound tribe's new constitution doesn't expand the tribe's jurisdiction to privately owned farmland, a concern that the tribe's chairman says was overblown.

The Interior Department approved July 7 a proposal by the Swinomish Indian tribe to delete references in its constitution to reservation boundaries set in 1873. Instead, the constitution will more generally describe the tribe's territory to include "accustomed fishing grounds."

Bureau of Indian Affairs Northwest director Stanley Speaks told the tribe in a letter that the constitutional amendment won't expand the tribe's territory. The letter responded to concerns of farmers, homeowners, businesses and Skagit County commissioners that the tribe would use the new description of its authority to gain control over land outside its 7,000-acre reservation.

Skagit Family Farmers director Gerald Baron said Friday that Speaks' letter satisfied the group's worries.

"What it does, as far as we're concerned, is make clear that the position of the federal government is that the tribe's



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

A farm harvests alfalfa in Skagit County, Wash. The Interior Department has OK'd a broader definition of a Puget Sound tribe's jurisdiction, but has assured farmers, businesses, homeowners and county officials that the new definition doesn't expand the tribe's authority over non-tribal lands.

jurisdiction isn't expanded beyond the boundaries of the reservation," Baron said.

The tribe has had a contentious relationship with agriculture, worsened by What's Upstream, a tribe-organized campaign to restrict farming near water. The campaign was funded by a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency.

"People would like to believe we are anti-ag," tribe Chairman Brian Cladoosby said Friday. "We just want people to understand ag has a responsibility like everybody else for the environment."

Cladoosby said that the BIA merely confirmed that the tribe has no interest in controlling farmland.

"Hopefully, people's fears will now be relieved," he said.

"The Swinomish has zero jurisdiction over ag land, and we want to keep it that way," Cladoosby said. "Agriculture is a necessary, important industry to the economy of Skagit County."

Cladoosby said the constitutional amendment clarifies that the tribe has jurisdiction over its members exercising their hunting, fish and gathering treaty rights off the reservation.

County officials went to Washington, D.C., and lobbied Interior Department officials, asking for a statement that the agency doesn't view the tribe's new constitution as an expansion of authority.

"I think this was a good outcome for us," said county Commissioner Ron Wesen, a dairy farmer.

Wesen said expanded tribal jurisdiction could hinder the operations of drainage systems, which make farming possible in much of the county. Tide-gate maintenance has been the source of litigation between the tribe and a drainage district.

Hazelnut group picks Oregon Aglink's Horning as CEO

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press



Geoff Horning

Geoff Horning, who directed Oregon Aglink for the past 11 years, has been chosen CEO of Oregon Hazelnut Industries, which represents one of the state's fastest growing agricultural sectors.

"Mom always said I was a little nuts, and I suppose that is official now," Horning joked in an email announcing the change.

Horning starts Sept. 1. He replaces Polly Owen, who is retiring and applauds her replacement.

"I'm good with it," said Owen, who will stay on for a time to help Horning transition into the position. She said hazelnut growers and processors did a national search and called Horning a "wonderful" choice.

He will be introduced Aug. 2 at the Nut Growers Society Summer Tour. The event includes an orchard tour in the Tangent area followed by a hazelnut-oriented trade show and luncheon at the Linn County Expo Center in Albany.

Horning is an Oregon native and a graduate of Linfield College. Before joining Oregon Aglink, a private nonprofit that promotes agriculture and attempts to bridge the urban-rural divide with programs and events, he managed trade shows and publications for the Oregon Association of Nurseries.

In taking the hazelnut position, Horning joins a

segment of Oregon agriculture that has grown dramatically in the past two decades and potentially could become more of an in-

ternational player. Oregon produces an estimated 99 percent of U.S. hazelnuts and appears poised to grab a larger share of the world market from Turkey, by far the largest production area.

Horning cautioned that he faces a "huge learning curve" in his new job but hopes to help position the industry "to be what it should be on the international scale." Oregon produces 3 to 5 percent of the world's hazelnuts but the majority of production is of in-shell nuts, which are popular as a snack in markets such as China. Industry observers have mused for years about adding value by increasing kernel production; shelled, dry-roasted Oregon hazelnuts sell for \$7.99 a pound in stores such as Trader Joe's.

Conversations with growers and processors made it clear "an opportunity does present itself," Horning said. He called hazelnuts "one of the most exciting segments of Oregon agriculture."

"I don't have a big agenda to come in and change everything," he said. "It's fair to say the hazelnut industry is going through immense growth."

Scotts claims significant progress in killing GE bentgrass in Oregon

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press



Danielle Posch

ONTARIO, Ore. — Scotts Miracle-Gro Co. is reporting significant progress in eliminating genetically engineered creeping bentgrass plants from Malheur and Jefferson counties in Oregon.

"We're making a tremendous dent in the population of bentgrass right now," said Danielle Posch, a senior research specialist with Scotts.

She was hired by Scotts in March to coordinate efforts to control the plant with local farmers, ranchers and irrigation districts.

The creeping bentgrass was genetically engineered by Scotts and Monsanto Corp. to withstand applications of glyphosate, the active ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup weed killer, which makes it hard to kill.

It took root in Malheur and

of crops to nations that don't accept traces of genetically modified organisms.

Malheur County farmer Dan Andersen said Scotts is making real progress in controlling the plant.

"They're doing a good job of staying right on top of it," said Andersen, co-chairman of a working group of farmers, irrigation district representatives and others that was created in Malheur County to coordinate with Scotts in its continuing efforts to try to control the plant.

Eastern Oregon farmer Bruce Corn, a member of the Owyhee Irrigation District's

board of directors, agrees.

He said he used to have several of the plants on his property "but it's really hard to find one on my place now. There's definite progress. I think so far Scotts is doing a pretty good job on it."

Andersen is not overly hopeful the plant will ever be eradicated from the area, "but I think we'll be able to get to a point where it's minor and very manageable," he said. "But we're still going to have

to be vigilant keeping an eye out for it and not letting our guard down."

Posch said efforts to fight the plant got a significant boost earlier this year when the Environmental Protection Agency approved a special local need label for Reckon, an herbicide that is effective in controlling the bentgrass.

The special label will allow growers and irrigation districts to spray glufosinate, the active ingredient in Reckon and the most effective

herbicide for killing the bentgrass, over water during the growing season.

That chemical previously could only be used over waterways, such as canals, during a period before the beginning of the growing season or after canals were dry.

The plants weren't growing during those times, which made it harder to kill them because they didn't take up the chemical, Posch said.

Being able to use Reckon over waterways during the

entire year is a game-changer in efforts to combat the GE creeping bentgrass, Posch said.

"In my opinion, it's a godsend," Andersen said.

Scotts has also started a voucher program that provides growers with the plant on their property with free, 2.5-gallon containers of Reckon.

For more information about that program, contact Posch by email at danielle.posch@scotts.com.

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