



Courtesy of Fresno Food Expo
Buyers from food service companies talk with San Joaquin Valley producers during the 2016 Fresno Food Expo. The seventh annual expo will be July 26-27.

Awards, speaker highlight seventh Fresno Food Expo

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

FRESNO — New product awards and a keynote address by “Supermarket Guru” Phil Lempert will highlight the seventh annual Fresno Food Expo on July 26-27.

Introduced in 2011 by city leaders to promote San Joaquin Valley agriculture, the expo aims to put producers from the eight-county region in touch with food service company buyers from around the world.

Organizers have since added an awards program for new products, varieties and packaging concepts, which this year has 28 entries.

Winning last year’s People’s Choice Award provided a boost to Terra Bella, Calif.-based ARO Pistachios, chief executive officer Adam Orandi said.

“Since our participation in the 2016 Fresno Food Expo, our e-commerce site has seen a 30 percent boom in activity and our company and reputation have been elevated into the international arena,” Orandi said in an email. “We are excited about the great opportunities this year’s expo will bring.”

Winners of this year’s Buyer’s Choice and People’s Choice awards will be announced at the July 26 open-

ing reception for pre-registered buyers and sponsors. Kicking off the expo at the Fresno Convention and Entertainment Center will be a speech by Lempert, a food trends expert who hosts a weekly radio show.

Lempert will discuss the new retail environment and the role of millennials and technology in the changing marketplace, according to organizers.

A trade show July 27 will showcase more than 140 area growers, producers, brewers and winemakers for entered buyers. Later that evening, a public portion, called Expolicious, will allow local residents to sample foods from local producers.

Participation by buyers has grown five-fold since the expo’s inception, with more than 900 attending last year’s event, organizers say.

“We have the most agriculturally rich region in the nation, which has spurred the creation of innovative food companies and products that are unique to our region,” expo general manager David Nalchajian said in an email. “It just feels right to talk about that ... and the Fresno Food Expo gives us a local, national and international platform to do so.”

Tickets for the public portion are \$50. Visit www.fresnofoodexpo.com.



Courtesy Fresno Food Expo
Attendees sample foods with ingredients grown in the San Joaquin Valley during the Fresno Food Expo in 2016. The seventh annual expo will be July 26-27.

Another Carlton wildfire three years later

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

CARLTON, Wash. — Wildfire burned about 1,200 acres north of Carlton in the Methow Valley July 15 and 16, destroying rangeland cattle grazing, a vacant house and recalling memories of the devastating Carlton Fire that occurred on the same dates three years earlier.

The Canyon Creek Fire was reported at 12:18 p.m. July 15 about a mile north of Carlton along State Route 153, said Maurice Goodall, director of Okanogan County Emergency Management. That’s 23 miles up the Methow River from Pateros and six miles downriver from Twisp.

“The cause hasn’t been determined but the thinking is it may have been sparks off a vehicle,” Goodall said.

The fire spread up a steep hillside of tall, dried grass and sparse pine trees, burning to the south, east and north, he said.

It jumped the highway and the Methow River but was quickly stopped in that direction by firefighters of Okanogan County Fire District No. 6, he said.

A house was destroyed that had been vacant since it was damaged in flooding after the 2014 fire, Goodall said. An out building also burned.

Helicopters, retardant planes and ground crews fought the fire and cool weather and shifting winds helped bring it moderately under control by Sunday evening, July 16, he said.

The main threat July 17 was expansion to the east, he said.

The fire was 75 percent contained that evening with containment lines built with bulldozers and hand crews, according to the Southeast Washington Interagency Incident Management Team.

State Route 153 closed at the fire scene but was reopened Monday and power was restored to most areas that lost power when power lines and poles burned.

Evacuation notices to homes from Carlton to Benson Creek and into Texas Creek were reduced to be ready-to-go on July 17, the Interagency team said.

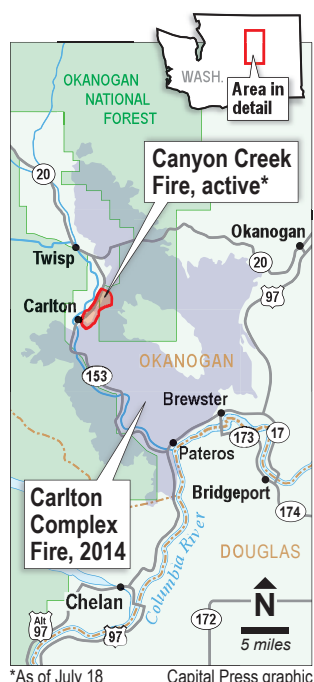
Firefighting personnel numbered 200 Sunday and 393 July 18 and were to be reduced because of significant reduction in fire activity. Some smoky haze in the area Tuesday was from wildfires in Canada, fire officials said.

The terrain that burned was a mix of private, state and federal land with most of it rangeland grazing by the Gebbers family’s cattle, Goodall said. No cattle were lost, he said.

A good portion of the acreage was also burned in the 2014 Carlton Fire and brought back memories and put people on edge,



Courtesy of Okanogan Emergency Management
Canyon Creek Fire burns alongside State Route 153 north of Carlton, Wash., the evening of July 15. Firefighters hoped to contain the fire at 1,200 acres.



*As of July 18
Capital Press graphic

Goodall said.

“Today was the day we evacuated three years ago. So it’s sort of deja vu,” Deb Stennes, a Methow orchardist, said July 17.

The Stenneses lost power for a few hours but were some 10 miles from the fire and did not feel endangered, she said.

In 2014, their homes were saved but they lost 20 acres of orchard, some irrigation pumps and 5.8 miles of deer fencing.

The Carlton Complex Fire, ignited in several spots in the Methow Valley by lightning on July 14, 2014, spread rapidly on July 17, racing 30 miles down valley, burning numerous homes in Pateros and threatening Brewster. It’s estimated the fire at times covered 4 to 5 acres per second.

It burned 256,108 acres, resulted in the deaths of two people, claimed approximately 1,000 cattle and destroyed some 500 miles of fencing and millions of board-feet of timber. It destroyed 277 primary residences, 50 cabins and knocked out electrical power to 3,602 customers for more than a week.

The Gebbers family lost patriarch Danny Gebbers and sustained losses in timber, cattle, fences and or-

New Carlton Fire lawsuit filed

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

OKANOGAN, Wash. — More than 200 people have filed a lawsuit over losses they sustained from the 2014 Carlton Complex Fire.

The lawsuit was filed in Okanogan County Superior Court on July 14, three years to the day after the fire started. Some 206 plaintiffs allege the state Department of Natural Resources was negligent in responding to and fighting the fire, which resulted in the loss of property and timber and emotional distress.

The suit seeks damages to be proven at a jury trial. Total losses exceed \$75 million, their attorney, Alex Thomason, of Brewster and Seattle, has estimated.

The suit is in addition to one Thomason filed in November 2015 on behalf of two plaintiffs after DNR denied all the plaintiffs’ claims.

If the initial suit were successful it would establish state liability for the rest of the claims, Thomason said in 2015. He now says liability will be litigated in court.

The 2015 suit is proceeding into discovery. He said he has no opinion on whether the two cases will be joined.

The Gebbers family of Brewster, owners of large tree fruit, cattle and timber holdings, are not part of either lawsuit.

The family estimated its losses in the fire in the millions of dollars.

Gebbers’ companies were reimbursed \$1.8 million by DNR for fighting the 2014 fire from the ground and air and received government assistance for some of its losses.

The lawsuits allege one of several lightning-caused fires started on DNR property, that neighbors promptly notified DNR and that it was negligent in responding and containing the fire.

Furthermore, the suit alleges that DNR refused local assistance and abandoned fire lines early in an evening and did not return until morning.

DNR has denied negligence in the initial lawsuit, saying resources were pulled from the fire for safety reasons and that it is not liable since it works for the public, not individuals or groups.

DNR claims any liability that is found is the fault of plaintiffs and any negligence was caused by people not party to the lawsuit. The DNR has asked the court to dismiss the case.

Thomason has said the suit presents important political and legal questions, chief among them whether the state is responsible like any landowner or if it has special rules allowing it to manage its land however it wants even if it results in the destruction of neighboring property.

chards estimated at \$15.4 million to \$17.8 million.

In 2015, 600,000 acres burned and nearly 300 cattle died in wildfires in Okanogan County.

More than 1 million acres, about one-third of the county, burned in the two summers, costing millions

of dollars in losses of public and private timber and the loss of thousands of acres of rangeland grazing for several years, causing ranchers to reduce herds and buy more hay. Ranchers were highly critical of state and federal firefighting efforts. Recovery efforts continue.

INTRODUCING THE DAILY CAPITAL PRESS

AN EMAIL NEWSLETTER FEATURING THAT DAY’S AG NEWS FROM AROUND THE NORTHWEST

FREE WITH YOUR CAPITAL PRESS SUBSCRIPTION

You don’t have to wait until Friday to get the latest Ag news and information. As part of your subscription, you’ll receive the Daily Capital Press in your inbox each Monday through Friday.

It’s easy to get this additional benefit for subscribers. Simply activate your account at CapitalPress.com/cp/Activate and you’ll automatically receive the Daily Capital Press. Plus, you’ll get unlimited access to the website –another subscriber benefit.

Capital Press
The West’s Ag Weekly



Have questions? Call
800.882.6789