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John O'Connell/Capital Press

Colden Baxter and Linda Engle, both of whom teach at Idaho State University, stand outside the ISU Pond Student Union Building, one of three locations statewide where a climate conference they're helping to organize will be hosted.

Ag, economy to be emphasized at conference

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho's agricultural and business leaders will offer their insight about climate change and how to cope with it during a conference scheduled for Nov. 16 and 17 at the state's three public universities.

Safeguarding Idaho's Economy in a Changing Climate — Our Water, Our Land, Our Health, Our Future will feature speakers at Boise State University, whose presentations will be streamed live at the University of Idaho in Moscow and Idaho State University in Pocatello. Break-out sessions for participants — including one on management of agriculture and rangeland in a changing climate — will be hosted during both afternoons at all three venues.

Several speakers come from agricultural backgrounds. Lynn Tominaga, executive director of Idaho Ground Water Appropriators Inc., will participate in a panel discussion on planning for changes in water availabil-

ity and quality and the timing and type of precipitation.

Karen Launchbaugh, director of the UI Rangeland Center, will serve on a panel discussing the true cost of wildfire. Erik Gonring, of Simplot Plant Sciences, and Rich Berger, with Clif Bar, will serve on a panel devoted to innovative solutions by Idaho's industrial leaders.

Scott Lowe, an economist and associate dean of BSU's graduate college, has researched how Idaho farmers are shifting toward rotations with more drought-tolerant crops as the Western climate becomes more variable. Lowe, who has promoted the conference to BSU students, believes emphasizing thoughts and possible solutions offered by businessmen who "deal with climate change on a daily basis" is the "natural next step" in the dialogue.

"Often you hear from the academics and the scientists," Lowe said. "Regardless of what they're saying, I think it's important to have a dialogue where the voices are from in-

dustry and businesses."

The cost of attending the conference is \$29, and anyone interested in attending may register online at www.idahoclimatesummit.com.

Organizers and sponsors include the Sierra Club, Monsanto, American Lung Association, Idaho Power, Hewlett-Packard, the state universities, DL Evans Bank, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho National Laboratory, Water Resources Research Institute, Upper Snake River Tribes, Nez Perce Tribe, Northwest Climate Science Center, Potlatch Corp. and Langdon Group. Organizers anticipate the conference will become an annual event.

Linda Engle, an ISU math instructor involved in organizing the Pocatello conference, said speakers and participants will focus on the problem during the first day, and offer their suggested solutions and coping strategies on the second day. Boise-based Warm Springs Consulting will produce a booklet documenting the discussions.

Ag leaders provide chamber members closer look at industry

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

CALDWELL, Idaho — A panel of farm industry leaders provided members of the Caldwell business community a look at some of the major issues and challenges the state's farming community faces.

The Oct. 10 event was sponsored by the Nampa-Caldwell Agribusiness Committee and attracted about 90 members of the Caldwell Chamber of Commerce.

The purpose of the event was to give members of the business community who might not be involved in agriculture a greater understanding of the industry and the challenges it faces, said agribusiness member Darrell Bolz, who moderated the panel discussion.

"It's really to give them a little broader perspective on what's going on in agriculture," he said.

Nampa, Idaho's third-largest city, and Caldwell, which ranks sixth in population, are located in Canyon County, one of the state's more diverse farming counties.

While one of the state's smallest counties in area, Canyon County ranks No. 5 out of the state's 44 counties in total farm cash receipts.

Jim Thomssen, a member of the Caldwell chamber's board of directors, said the annual event is also held to "make sure everybody knows what a great part of the economy agriculture is."

The panel discussed a wide range of topics, including the industry's struggles with finding enough workers.

"Labor is a big challenge for us right now," said Berna Dairy owner Bernie



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Idaho Cattle Association Executive Vice President Cameron Mulrone talks about issues the state's farming community faces, Oct. 10 during a meeting of the Caldwell Chamber of Commerce. He was joined by Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Blaine Jacobson, left, and dairyman Bernie Teunissen.

Teunissen. "There simply is not enough bodies to get the work done."

Bolz asked the panelists where they see technology taking agriculture in the future and all four agreed it would play an increasing role.

Over the past 15 years, "The growers that have stayed in business are those that have adopted technology and I think that's going to continue," said Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Blaine Jacobson.

Teunissen said the use of robotics in the dairy industry is just getting started.

"That's rapidly advancing, which will really help with the labor situation," he said. "I expect it to really accelerate in the next 10 years."

Idaho Power representative Dennis Merrick said precision agriculture has already helped farmers save money.

"Technology in irrigation is going to become more efficient and precise (in the future)," he said. "I think it's

going to benefit farmers quite a bit."

There was unanimous agreement by the panelists that the North American Free Trade Agreement, which is being renegotiated by the U.S., Canada and Mexico, has benefited agriculture and is fine largely the way it is.

"It's treated us pretty well as far as the ability to move cattle back and forth," said Idaho Cattle Association Executive Vice President Cameron Mulrone. "We'd like NAFTA to be left like it is."

"I think among the agriculture industry, there is the near unanimous opinion that NAFTA is good," Jacobson said.

When it comes to preserving farmland, panelists said growers are split on that issue, with some wanting to protect agricultural ground and others adamant about protecting their right to sell to developers if they choose.

"It's a very controversial subject in the farming community," Teunissen said.

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Fundraiser Provides Blue Jackets to FFA Members

By Tim Hearden
Capital Press

Having met its \$6,500 goal last year, the California FFA Foundation will again raise money for blue corduroy jackets for students who can't afford to purchase them.

The Nov. 28 fundraiser is tied to Giving Tuesday, a United Nations Foundation-sponsored movement to encourage philanthropy at the beginning of the holiday season.

State FFA leaders saw a need last year as many students have had to borrow jackets from their chapters for competitions and events, foundation development director Katie Otto has said.

Last year, the group raised enough to give a jacket with a tie or scarf to 100 students.

"Your gift will provide an FFA member with the opportunity to experience the pride and passion of wearing the iconic blue and gold jacket," the organization states on its website.

The push started during the run-up to last year's Big Day of Giving in the Sacramento area, during which local residents and businesses donated more than \$22,000 to support FFA and agricultural education. This year's Big Day of Giving on May 4 raised another \$10,459 for FFA.

In all, about 40,000 donors gave almost \$7.2 million to nearly 600 nonprofit organizations on that day, according to organizers.

Started in 2012, Giving Tuesday always falls on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, on the heels of Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

For information and to donate, visit www.calaged.org/givingtuesday.

In other California FFA news:

Breanna Holbert, a 2015-16 state secretary and current national officer candidate, recently joined employees of the state FFA foundation to engage with industry leaders at the annual CropLife America conference.

The meeting Sept. 22-27 in Dana Point, Calif., focused on agricultural innovation and included a program that explored the ways technology moves "food forward," according to its website.

Holbert made remarks about the value of advocacy, leadership and the impact that CropLife America members have on the future of the industry, according to the state FFA's Facebook page.

CropLife America, which is also known as the American Crop Protection Association, is a trade organization that represents manufacturers, formulators and distributors of pesticides.

Current California FFA state officers (from left) Jasmine Flores, Genevieve Regli, Luke O'Leary, Armando Nevarez, Robert Marchy and Hunter Andrade pose for photos in Fresno in April. The state FFA will hold its second annual fundraiser in conjunction with national Giving Tuesday on Nov. 28, raising money to purchase jackets for members who can't afford them.

A trailer with the California FFA takes supplies to organization events.

The audience at the annual California FFA Leadership Conference is a sea of blue jackets. The California FFA Foundation is again tying a fundraiser to Giving Tuesday in an effort to help students who can't afford their own blue corduroy jackets.

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