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Idaho

Busy agenda set for annual meeting

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

FORT HALL, Idaho — Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members in Bonneville County reason the state doesn't fund commodity groups, so it's inappropriate that the governor has the final say in appointing their board members.

During the organization's 78th Annual Meeting, scheduled for Dec. 5-7 at the Fort Hall Convention Center, Farm Bureau delegates from each county will vote on a resolution calling for growers to appoint their own commodity leaders. It is among several proposed policy updates.

Farm Bureau prides itself in having policies that originate from a grass-roots level. Resolutions start as suggestions made during county meetings. They must also be endorsed at the district level and by the State Resolutions Committee before they can be ratified at the annual meeting by the House of Delegates, which includes two representatives from each county.

Farm Bureau spokesman John Thompson said other resolutions of interest pertain to the organization's position on establishing a Craters of the Moon National Park and to wheat discounts.

Thompson explained the organization already has a resolution opposing "any change to federal or state land designation where there is a potential to harm agriculture," which was drafted in response to an effort to make a national park at Craters of the Moon National Monument. Thompson said Oneida County's proposed resolution would "get right to the meat of it" and more directly specify, "We oppose Craters of the Moon becoming a national park."

Clearwater and Lewis counties have proposed a resolution expressing Farm Bureau's position that wheat shouldn't be discounted at elevators below the feed price when it fails the low falling numbers test. The test measures starch degradation caused either by temperature fluctuations or pre-harvest sprouting.

The conference's top award, called the President's Cup, will be given this year to Dean and Shirlene Schwendimann, who raise row crops in Teton. Dean Schwendimann has been on the federation's state board for two decades, and Shirlene has been active on the Women's Committee.

Farmers who 'identity preserve' wheat may benefit

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho farmers are positioned to take advantage of a growing trend among wheat buyers seeking wheat with specific traits that is "identity preserved."

That was the message Dennis Capson, a merchandiser for Scouler Co., which specializes in marketing grain, stressed to Idaho Wheat Commission board members at their Oct. 26 meeting.

Capson said his company often receives calls from millers asking for wheat that is identity preserved by variety and trait. Since elevators lack the ability to do that, he said, farmers who identity preserve their wheat could benefit from it.

"If they will keep that wheat separate, it will give us an opportunity to go out and try to market that (and) hopefully there is some premium involved," he told



Sean Ellis/Capital Press file

A wheat field near Meridian, Idaho. Farmers may be able to receive a premium for preserving the identity of their wheat by variety and traits, a marketer says.

IWC board members, who are all growers. "I really think that is the future for (wheat) farmers."

Capson said identity preserving grain "is another way for a farmer to try to get a little more out of his wheat."

There may or may not be a premium involved in doing that, he said.

"It's possible, but if they don't identity preserve it, then it's not possible," Capson said. "It's just commingled wheat."

Cathy Wilson, the IWC's director of research collaboration, said Idaho is unique in that it grows four classes of wheat, while most states grow just one, so Idaho growers are accustomed to separating wheat by class.

"Historically, because of that, Idaho growers have had on-farm storage," she said.

In Idaho, identity preserving wheat has traditionally meant not commingling red and white wheat, Wilson said.

But the next step, which is being dictated by customers wanting a specific wheat trait to set their products apart, is for those farmers to separate their wheat by variety and trait, she said.

"That's where it's going and Idaho is positioned to

be able to take advantage of that," Wilson said. "That's where the money is going to be for the guys who can do that."

But to do that, she added, "you have to have enough on-farm storage to keep that single variety separate. Many growers have on-farm storage."

Whether they have enough to start segregating by variety or trait is another question.

"Those growers who have invested in that will be in a better position to do identity preserved wheat," Wilson said.

Idaho wheat growers have been trained to separate their grain by class, whereas in many other states, "wheat is wheat," said Zac Miller, director of commodities for the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

"I think we have a chance to be the first ones there," he said of the industry trend toward identity preserving wheat on the farm.

Study identifies sediment source in Portneuf River tributary

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

POCATELLO, Idaho — Bank erosion in the lower reach of Marsh Creek is responsible for most of its excessive sediment loads, according to an Idaho State University researcher who has studied water quality in the impaired Portneuf River tributary.

Ben Crosby, an ISU associate professor of geosciences, said the findings could open new opportunities for landowners along the muddy stream to participate in cost-sharing conservation programs.

Furthermore, Crosby said his research highlights how and where to target those conservation dollars, and clarifies that the source of erosion isn't other tributaries, grazing in highlands near the creek's headwaters, or lowland farm fields and pastures.

"The conservation action that would be most impactful right now would be construction of wetlands along the stream to slow water down and allow sediment deposition," said Crosby, adding he's discussed possible programs to stabilize banks and build wetlands with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In conjunction with Crosby's study, Casey Taylor, a post-doctoral researcher with ISU's Department of Political Science, will soon mail 1,500 surveys to landowners along Marsh Creek, which meanders through homes and farms and ranches of varying sizes upstream of Pocatello.

Taylor said survey questions were based on previous interviews with 15 landowners along Marsh Creek and will seek to identify willing participants for future conservation efforts. Furthermore,



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Idaho State University geosciences associate professor Ben Crosby stands on a cliff overlooking the confluence of Marsh Creek and the Portneuf River, near Inkom, Idaho. Crosby is part of a study that concluded bank erosion in the lower reach of Marsh Creek is responsible for heavy sediment loads, and establishment of wetlands in collaboration with willing landowners would be an effective way to improve water quality.

she and her graduate students will ask landowners if they farm or ranch, how many cattle they may graze, whether they've participated in past conservation efforts and if they're troubled by Marsh Creek water quality.

"Our goal is to produce a report that will help our conservation agency partners inform their future management strategies," Taylor said. "One critical element that gets left out of a lot of studies of conservation projects is the perspective of landowners who are a critical piece of it."

Inkom rancher Jim Guthrie

Sr., for example, has planted about 2,000 willows along the creek through his property during the past 17 years, partnering with Farm Service Agency on some of his riparian improvements. Guthrie has also fenced his cattle out of the creek and added off-stream watering.

"I can't believe how much (sediment) reduction there's been," Guthrie said.

Crosby explained efforts have been made to improve water quality in the stream for several decades. Though projects done over the years have helped to cut sediment

loads in half, Crosby said Marsh Creek is still the major contributor of sediment into the Portneuf upstream of Pocatello.


Crosby and his students spent the past three seasons studying data from 13 sensors placed throughout the creek that transmit water-quality data every 15 minutes. They also floated the creek in kayaks to evaluate stream bank integrity.

Major funding for the study came from the National Science Foundation's Managing Idaho's Landscapes for Ecosystem Services grant.


The city of Pocatello contributed \$60,000 in seed money.

Hannah Sanger, the city's environmental coordinator, explained the city has to pay more for its permit to discharge stormwater because of the poor water quality in the Portneuf River. She said the city sees the greatest potential to improve river conditions by addressing issues in Marsh Creek.

"It's pretty exciting to now have the data to see the options on the table that are going to be effective," Sanger said. "That's light years ahead of where we were."





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