



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

An irrigation canal in Klamath County, Ore. The NRCS is encouraging the county's farmers to apply for funding to protect against soil erosion as the basin prepares for drought.

NRCS program may help Klamath County farmers amid drought in basin

Applications for EQIP due April 25

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

As Klamath County, Ore., farmers and ranchers prepare for drought, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is offering financial assistance for mitigating wind erosion on highly vulnerable soils.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown declared a drought emergency for Klamath County on March 13, which officials predict could result in economic losses exceeding \$557 million. Meanwhile, the NRCS is encouraging producers to apply for funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, or EQIP, to plant a small grain cover crop that will protect against erosion.

David Ferguson, district conservationist for the NRCS, said wind erosion can damage adjacent crops, impact traffic visibility and cause other problems.

"This funding is a very short-term solution, but should be considered as a beginning to soil quality maintenance that incorporates a cover crop following intensive fall tillage," Ferguson said.

The potential for wind erosion increases during a drought, due to the lack of available irrigation water. EQIP funding is only available for farmers and ranchers with highly erodible soils.

Applications are due April 25, and are prioritized

based on soil type, erodibility, proximity to roads and residue conditions at the time of application. Seeding will be reimbursed at \$41.90 per acre.

Additional funding may also be available depending on irrigation water supply in the coming months.

A spokeswoman for the Bureau of Reclamation in Klamath Falls said there is still no start date or water allocation set for basin irrigators. The bureau held a public meeting March 20 at the Klamath County Fairgrounds, where farmers were told the start date could be as soon as May 1 or as late as June 15, according to a report in the Herald and News.

Water for the Klamath Project is governed by a 2013 joint biological opinion between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service to protect endangered fish. A 2017 court injunction also requires the bureau to release 6,030 cubic feet per second of water between Nov. 1 and April 30 to flush away a deadly parasite known as *C. shasta* infecting coho salmon.

The bureau claims it has developed a proposal that, if approved by the court, would allow regulators to establish an allocation and start date for irrigation. The document is due March 23, and a hearing date may be held April 4 or April 11.

For more information about EQIP, contact Ferguson at the NRCS in Klamath Falls at 541-887-3503.

Long waiting list for sheep shearing school

Demand high for shearers, wool

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

For newcomers to the Washington State Shearing School, Sarah Smith has a single recommendation: Get prepared.

"It's going to challenge them physically and mentally," said Smith, Washington State University Extension regional specialist for animal sciences in Moses Lake, Wash. "It's about having those exercises and stretches so you have the right muscles ready and then be able to visualize the process, so that when we put a sheep in your lap and a sharp pair of clippers in your hand, your mind can start to think through it. A lot of times, if people haven't mentally and physically prepared themselves, they almost kind of lock up and struggle miserably."

Smith started sending students exercises in November to prepare them for the course April 2-7 in Moses Lake. Most students begin to understand the process around day three or four, she said, likening it to learning how to ride a bicycle.

"They are going to hurt after day one, I guarantee you," she said.



Sarah Smith/WSU Grant-Adams Extension

The Washington State Shearing School trains commercial sheep shearers and ranchers. The school is April 2-7 and has a waiting list of 60 people. Another session is contemplated for later in the year.

The school has space for 16 students and filled up in one day, Smith said. Sixty people are on the waiting list, and discussions are underway to offer a second school in the fall, she said. To get on

the waiting list, contact Smith at 509-754-2011, extension 4363, or email smithsm@wsu.edu.

Established in 1977, the school trains commercial shearers and helps small-scale

ranchers learn to shear their sheep.

Most sheep need their wool removed annually for the comfort of the animal and for a sustainable product to sell.

Some breeds have to be sheared twice a year.

Smith estimates there are roughly 50,000 head of sheep in Washington. In 2017, the state produced 270,000 pounds of wool.

Demand for finer, next-to-skin wool has skyrocketed. Smith credits the renewed interest to groups of consumers interested in getting back to nature, and the rediscovery of wool's properties, such as breathability and moisture resistance.

Australia and New Zealand have fewer sheep than previously, Smith said, which has contributed to the increased demand of U.S. wool.

Coarse wools are in lower demand, so the industry is looking for other uses, such as in sneakers and carpeting, Smith said. Some fiber artists also use coarse wools, she said.

"I think sheep lend themselves well to small farms and beginning farmers," she said. "It's not quite as intimidating as cattle."

The school, put on by WSU Extension, the Washington State Sheep Producers and Columbia Basin Sheep Producers, is at the Grant County Fairgrounds.

Workshops help farmers transition land to next generation

Capital Press

The Oregon nonprofit Rogue Farm Corps is convening four, day-long events this April to help the current generation of farmers develop succession plans and the next generation of farmers find working land.

"Changing Hands: A Workshop Series on Farm Succession Planning and Access to Land," will feature the tools and resources that farmers, ranchers and foresters need to keep Oregon's working lands working.

"The goal of the Changing Hands series is not only to educate, but to help build the connections necessary for a resilient farm community," Nellie McAdams, RFC's farmland preservation program director, said in a press release.

McAdams has been on the road this winter and spring talking about succession planning with ranchers, farmers, foresters, and other community members.

"The tidal wave of farmland transition isn't coming — we're in the middle of it," she said. "But we also have the solutions at our fingertips. This event is designed to help people discover and take the next step towards transitioning or accessing land."



Capital Press File

Nellie McAdams of Rogue Farms Corps is offering four workshops to help the current generation of farmers develop succession plans and the next generation of farmers find working land.

Retiring farmers can learn from experts about what it takes to pass on their business to the next generation — keeping it in the family or finding others to carry it on.

Aspiring farmers can learn about creative ways to start a farm business with topics on finding, leasing, financing and buying agricultural land.

The day-long workshop starts with breakfast at 7:30 a.m. The program begins at 8:30 and goes through 5 p.m. with lunch and afternoon snacks included.

Register by April 10 for \$20, including meals. Late registration will be \$30.

The agenda is as follows:
7:30-8:30 a.m.: Registra-

tion and breakfast.

8:30-9 a.m.: Welcome and keynote.

9:15-10:30 a.m.:

• Succession Track: Working with your family to plan for succession.

• Access to Land Track: Finding and leasing farmland, including creative pathways to land tenure.

10:45 a.m.-noon:

• Both Tracks: Buying and selling agricultural real estate.

Noon-1 p.m.: Lunch at facilitated discussion tables.

1-2:15 p.m.:

• Succession Track: Working with your attorney and professional team to plan for succession.

• Access to Land Track: Fi-

ancing options for purchasing land, conventional and emerging.

2:30-3:45 p.m.:

• Both Tracks: Creative methods for passing on assets and management to next generation.

3:45-4 p.m.: Thank you and takeaways from the event.

4:15-5 p.m.: Snacks and networking.

Workshop locations:

• Portland area: Friday, April 20, Harmony Campus Community Room, Clackamas Community College, 7726 SE Harmony Road, Milwaukie, Ore.

• Medford: Monday, April 23, SOU Higher Education Center, Room 129,101 South Bartlett St., Medford, Ore.

• Redmond: Friday, April 27, Central Oregon Community College, Redmond Technology Education Center, 2324 Southeast College Loop, Redmond, Ore.

• Springfield: Monday, April 30, Sprout! Regional Food Hub, 418 A St., Springfield, Ore.

Rogue Farm Corps is an Oregon nonprofit that exists to train the next generation of farmers and ranchers through hands-on educational programs and the preservation of farmland.

For more information: www.roguefarmcorps.org/



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