

Wyoming develops unique solutions to water supply

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press
Nephi Cole, policy adviser to Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead, talks about the state's water strategy during the Idaho Water Users Association's water law conference in Sun Valley on June 11.

SUN VALLEY, Idaho — Seeing the need to better manage, develop, protect, conserve and restore water in Wyoming, Gov. Matt Mead took the issue to the state's citizens. The result was a 10-point water strategy that has garnered public consensus.

The key was public involvement, Nephi Cole, the governor's policy adviser, told water users and attorneys at the Idaho Water Users Association's water law conference.

"We identified people don't like it when government shows up and tells you what to do," he said last week.

Instead, the governor held nine public meetings on the issue in 2013, encouraging grassroots groups to tell government what the problems were and which solutions would help.

"We looked at different strategies and (identified) 10 overarching initiatives based on public input," he said.

Those initiatives were presented to the public for more input. The process resulted

addressing monitoring, analysis, water quality and restoration, the strategy also addresses water storage.

Public consensus on storage was gained in part by focusing on improvements to existing infrastructure, which keeps costs down without expanding the state's environmental footprint, he said.

The governor's office talked to people about putting in a new dam on the Green River, but a more palatable solution was found in modifying two projects already in place — the Fontenelle Dam and the Glendo Reservoir.

Fontenelle Reservoir has a capacity of 346,000 acre-feet of water but needs improvements to realize that capacity and to utilize all of the water, he said.

It is limited by lack of armoring to protect the lower interior dam face and lacks infrastructure to utilize stored water. Completion of the project could potentially allow 100,000 to 200,000 acre-feet of usable storage to be accessed.

Using the existing dam and not increasing the environmental footprint got wide support, he said.

The Glendo Reservoir has a total capacity of 800,000 acre-feet, of which 275,000 acre-feet are used for flood control by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The strategy is to repurpose a portion of the flood-control space and use the water for operational purposes.

The other water storage initiative — the Ten in Ten project — is a fairly ambitious effort to complete at least 10 small reservoirs in 10 years. The reservoirs hold 2,000 to 20,000 acre-feet and are easier to permit than large reservoirs, he said.

"We believe the time to start building reservoirs is not when you need it; it's 20 years before they're needed," he said.

The state will break ground on the first of those reservoir projects this summer, he said.

Wyoming's water strategy is part of the governor's Leading the Charge: Wyoming's Action Plan for Energy, Environment and Economy.

"We strongly believe in Wyoming this is not a zero-sum game. We don't have to starve in the dark or have a negative environmental impact," he said.



Dan Wheat/Capital Press File

A labor union has sued an orchard, WAFLA and a recruiting firm alleging they blackballed H-2A workers who participated in a strike last year.

Union, former H-2A workers sue Larson Orchards

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

YAKIMA, Wash. — A labor union is suing Larson Orchard Management Inc., WAFLA and CSI Visa Processing alleging they retaliated against 17 former H-2A-visa foreign guestworkers by not rehiring them this year after they went on strike last year.

Familias Unidas por la Justicia (FUJ), a Burlington, Wash., farmworkers union formed in 2013 to represent workers at the Sakuma Bros. berry farm, filed the suit against Larson, WAFLA and CSI in Yakima County Superior Court on June 14. The lawsuit asks the court to require the company to hire the workers and seeks damages for lost wages.

"These workers live in poverty in Mexico and have very few options to provide for their families. If they are blacklisted for advocating for better conditions, their opportunities to work in the U.S. are destroyed," said Joe Morrison, an attorney with Columbia Legal Services, which is representing FUJ.

"H-2A workers are highly vulnerable workers with few rights and protections. They take a huge risk to speak up about working conditions in part because of the rampant retaliation and blacklisting within the H-2A program," Morrison said.

Keith Larson, president of Larson Fruit Co., Selah, had little comment, saying he had just learned of the lawsuit. WAFLA director Dan Fazio could not be reached for comment.

WAFLA, previously known as the Washington

Farm Labor Association, hires H-2A workers for member companies including Larson through recruitment contractor CSI in Durango, Mexico.

In September 2017, H-2A workers at Larson's W&L Orchards nine miles southwest of Quincy quit picking apples to protest alleged bullying by a supervisor for allegedly not working fast enough, alleged unsafe work conditions and other complaints.

In response, several state Department of Labor & Industries inspections found no serious violations, Larson said at the time. Three workers were fired, then reinstated and an agreement was reached between FUJ and Larson in which Larson agreed not to blacklist the workers the following year.

Larson said last year that he might hire them again if they did good work but that there were no guarantees.

In response to the lawsuit, Larson said the agreement does not require him to rehire the same workers. He declined comment on the quality of their work after they returned last season from their strike.

The lawsuit alleges Larson, WAFLA and CSI violated the agreement this season when they recruited 156 H-2A workers with only four from last year who did not participate in the strike. The 17 who did strike weren't rehired.

Further, the lawsuit alleges violation of Washington's Little Norris-LaGuardia Act, which protects all workers who join together to improve their working conditions.

'Artificial fruit' could control spotted wing drosophila

By GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

Spotted wing drosophila

- A type of "vinegar fly", its ability to feed and lay eggs on ripening fruit makes it a significant threat to Pacific Northwest growers.
- Adult spotted wing drosophilas are small with red eyes and pale yellowish-brown bodies.
- Males have a dark spot on the tips of their wings. They also have two dark bands on their front legs.
- Females lack the distinctive dark spot on their wings. Look for a large, serrated ovipositor protruding from the abdomen.
- For more information on monitoring, preventative, cultural and chemical controls, go to: spottedwing.org

Female Male

Actual size 2-3 mm

Sources: Oregon State University Extension Service Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

Two products under development by Oregon State University could give Northwest berry growers new options for controlling the spotted wing drosophila, a particularly harmful type of fruit fly.

One product in particular, described as an "artificial fruit" that lures the pests away from the berries without directly competing against the crop, has Bernadine Strik excited.

"This is cutting-edge work," said Strik, a berry crops specialist at OSU. "These patent-pending products have me doing a happy dance."

Details about the product were limited — the patent is, after all, still pending. But Valerio Rossi-Stacconi, who works in the OSU Department of Horticulture, said it is a food grade attractant that can work for both conventional and certified organic growers.

Trials have shown the product reduces the number of fruit flies in berries by as much as 76 percent, Rossi-Stacconi said.

"We are very happy about this," he said. "These keep the insect from the fruit throughout the whole fruiting process."

The "artificial fruit" development may be available commercially by 2020, Rossi-Stacconi said.

Researchers shared the latest updates and information with about 40 growers June 6 during Strawberry Field Day at the OSU North Willamette Research & Extension Center in Aurora, Ore.

The other product, designed for blueberries to thicken the skin and protect against the



George Plaven/Capital Press

About 40 growers attended the annual Strawberry Field Day at OSU's North Willamette Research & Extension Center, where they could taste and compare different strawberry varieties available commercially.

flies, could be available as early as next year.

Spotted wing drosophila is troublesome for berry and stone fruit growers because, unlike other drosophila species, it infests them early during ripening, rather than later as they rot.

According to a study by the Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics at the University of California, yield losses can range up to 80 per-

cent depending on the crop and location. In 2008, Oregon, Washington and California accounted for 76 percent of total U.S. raspberry, blackberry, strawberry, blueberry and cherry production.

Assuming maximum yield loss, the combined loss at the farm gate for all three states would be approximately \$2.5 billion, including \$1.5 billion for strawberries alone.

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