

Interim director named for KBREC

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

A longtime station agronomist and potato researcher is taking the reins at Oregon State University's Klamath Basin Research and Extension Center in Klamath Falls, Ore.



Brian Charlton



Willie Riggs

Brian Charlton has been named interim director at KBREC, effective July 1. He replaces Willie Riggs, who was appointed regional director for OSU Extension Service's newly configured southern region.

The move comes as OSU Extension tightens its belt from 10 regions across the state to six. The redesigned southern region includes Klamath, Lake, Douglas, Jackson and Josephine counties.

Riggs previously served as the regional administrator for Klamath, Lake and Harney counties, in addition to his role as KBREC director. With the transition, Riggs steps out of day-to-day management at KBREC, though he said he will continue to work closely with Charlton.

"We'll continue our strong relationship there," Riggs said.

Charlton has spent his entire 24-year career at OSU. He started as a student employee at KBREC while earning his bachelor's degree in crop and soil science, and has gone on to hold a number of positions at the station, including associate professor, instructor and senior faculty research assistant.

Since 2014, Charlton has served as the Klamath Basin Potato Faculty Scholar, focused on developing new potato varieties for Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

Charlton said he is excited to take on a new role while maintaining his research program.

"I'd assume there aren't too many Oregon agricultural experiment station directors who started at their respective centers as a student employee, returned as a research assistant and were hired as project leader, then appointed director," Charlton said. "I'll be able to bring a unique understanding of branch station operation from top to bottom."

Riggs led KBREC for 11 years, starting in 2007. As regional director for OSU Extension, he will continue to be based in Klamath Falls while providing leadership, administration and budget oversight over five counties.

OSU Extension programs include 4-H, SNAP-Ed and farm and horticulture research. Between research and extension, the station has 18 full-time staff and faculty plus two summer interns.

Oregon OSHA adopts stricter rules for pesticide drift protection

Workers will be allowed to take shelter in housing

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

Oregon regulators will allow farmworkers and their families to take shelter indoors from drifting pesticides under controversial rules adopted Monday by the state Occupational Health and Safety Administration, or Oregon OSHA.

The new rules are part of an effort to clarify "Application Exclusion Zones" introduced by the Environmental Protection Agency in its 2015 update of the federal Agricultural Worker Protection Standard.

The zones — or AEZs — require farms and orchards to evacuate workers within 100 feet of where rigs or planes are spraying pesticides, returning only after the equipment has passed. Farmers, however, quickly realized that the law did not address farmworker housing that may be within the AEZ.

The issue is especially problematic for fruit growers in the Columbia River Gorge, who often spray their orchards in the early morning when there is no wind. They argued the AEZ rules would force them to rouse workers from their sleep and remove them from their homes when it would be safer to let them remain indoors.

Oregon OSHA ultimately agreed, and provided for a shelter-in-place compliance



Associated Press File

Oregon has adopted new rules aimed at protecting farmworkers when pesticides are applied.

alternative so long as doors, windows and air intakes are closed during spraying and the chemical does not require use of a respirator on its label.

"If it's a structure that can be closed, and given that we're talking about off-target drift that shouldn't be occurring in the first place, there is an added level of protection allowing people to shelter in place," said Michael Wood, Oregon OSHA administrator.

For chemicals that do require the use of a respirator, the rules become much more strict, with the AEZ expanding to 150 feet and removing the shelter-in-place option. That exceeds the normal 100-foot requirement under the EPA guideline.

Pesticide drift is already illegal in Oregon, though it does sometimes occur. The Oregon Department of Agriculture investigated 172 complaints of chemical drift resulting in 38 violations in 2016, and 82 cases resulting in 10 violations in 2017.

Putting the new rules into action means farmworkers and their families will be better

protected in Oregon than they are in the vast majority of the country, Wood said. The rules take effect Jan. 1, 2019.

The rules, however, were sharply criticized by both grower groups, who claim the protections go too far, and farmworker advocates, who claim they do not go far enough.

Mike Doke, executive director of the Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers Association, said members are pleased to see a shelter-in-place option for the 100-foot AEZ, but added a 150-foot AEZ for pesticides that require use of a respirator is not backed by scientific evidence.

"We just have to come in and adhere to a whim because somebody thought it was a good idea," Doke said.

Approximately two-thirds of Oregon's 314 registered labor camps are in Wasco and Hood River counties, home to most of the state's pear and cherry orchards. Doke said growers do not heavily use chemicals that require a respirator, but that could change as the industry faces challenges

from new emerging pests, such as the brown marmorated stink bug.

In the end, the AEZ rules may force some growers to remove housing or blocks of trees, resulting in lost jobs and production, Doke said. The hardest hit may be small growers, who may be forced to sell to larger companies, he added.

"It's another cost they can't incur," Doke said.

Adam McCarthy, co-owner of Trout Creek Farm Management in Parkdale, Ore., grows pears, apples and cherries for the fresh market on roughly 250 acres south of Hood River. He said they spray pesticides that require a respirator two or three times a year, which will now require him to evacuate as many as 10 housing units around the orchards.

"Now you're going to have this process where there's going to be a need for them to leave their living quarters and go somewhere where Oregon OSHA has not defined. ... I think that puts more risk into the equation," McCarthy said.

Lisa Arkin, executive di-

rector of the group Beyond Toxics based in Eugene, Ore., said her organization advocated tougher pesticide rules, including a no-spray buffer to protect labor camps.

House Bill 3549, which passed the Oregon Legislature in 2015, already requires that forest managers conducting aerial sprays cannot come within 60 feet of homes or schools. Arkin said the same standard should apply to agriculture when spraying around farmworker housing.

"The fact that Oregon OSHA has denied even this very modest no-spray buffer for farmworkers and their homes appears to me to be differential treatment for farmworkers," she said.

Ramon Ramirez, president of Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste — the largest Latino union in Oregon — agreed the pesticide protections do not go far enough to protect farmworkers.

"The fact of the matter is that labor camps in the Willamette Valley are in really bad shape, and also in Jackson County and in different places," Ramirez said. "It is important that farmworkers be protected."

Ramirez said the union is evaluating its next steps, and may consider legal action. He said the average life expectancy of farmworkers is just 49, compared to 78 for the rest of the country, and workers are also at higher risk for cancer and miscarriages.

"We think farmworkers are being short-changed on their lives to put food on the table," Ramirez said.

Ag groups cheer Senate passage of farm bill

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

Groups representing U.S. farmers are applauding the Senate's strong bipartisan approval of its farm bill that passed late last week in an 86-11 vote.

In statements issued to the press, many noted the Senate's passage brings farmers one step closer to much needed certainty in a time of financial stress and an unknown export outlook. They also urged Senate and House members to quickly find common ground to strengthen the farm safety net.

"Chairman (Pat) Roberts and ranking member (Debbie) Stabenow worked with other members of the Senate Agriculture Committee to deliver a bill that will continue to provide the risk management tools that America's farmers need now more than ever before," Zippy Duvall, the American Farm Bureau Federation president, said.

"Of course, no bill is ever perfect, but this bipartisan effort gives us a solid framework for progress," he said.

AFBF has concerns about some of the provisions that were added to the bill that make it harder for farmers to manage risk, but it is confident those issues can be satisfactorily

addressed by the conference committee, he said.

The National Farmers Union's board of directors unanimously supported the Senate's efforts when the bill was first introduced and is pleased with its passage.

The bill "includes encouraging provisions that strengthen the farm safety net, promote farm sustainability and ensure access to fair and diverse markets, all of which would provide essential security," Rob Larew, NFU senior president of public policy and communications, said.

The National Association of Wheat Growers is pleased the bill reauthorizes conservation and trade promotion programs and appreciates the Senate's increased funding for the Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative.

But it will continue to advocate for increased funding for trade promotion, a stronger research title and crop insurance provisions.

"Crop insurance is a unique risk-management tool available for farmers and ranchers. NAWG continues to advocate for a strong crop insurance program and continued choice between ARC (Agricultural Risk Coverage) and PLC (Price Loss Coverage) in the final version," Jim Musick, NAWG president, said.

The National Corn Growers Association said senators recognized the importance and effectiveness of risk-management tools, including a robust federal crop insurance program.

"With the combined threat of retaliatory tariffs and an EPA seemingly intent on dismantling the RFS (Renewable Fuels Standard), farmers need a strong farm bill now more than ever," Kevin Skunes, the NCGA president, said.

National Cattlemen's Beef Association said more work on the farm bill is needed to address cattle producers' priorities.

"While the Senate version includes permanent authorization of the Foot and Mouth Disease Vaccine Bank, zero dollars are provided," Kevin Kester, NCBA president, said.

The bill also left out important changes to the conservation title that were included in the House version, he said.

The National Milk Producers Federation said the bill adds \$100 million to the dairy title baseline, enhances the Margin Protection Program, reauthorizes trade promotion programs and includes provisions to promote consumption of fluid milk and foster innovation and new opportunities in the dairy industry.

Drought officially returns to Western Washington

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

Streams are dropping, July could be a scorcher and drought has officially returned to Western Washington.

Looking at all that, the state Department of Ecology may issue for the first time a drought advisory, an early warning to be careful with water.

Ecology drought coordinator Jeff Marti said it's too much to expect summer rains to reverse the trend toward lower flows. "I think our hydrological fate has been set for the summer," he said.

Ecology hosted a conference call Friday with resource agencies and water managers from around the state. The consensus was that streams and rivers are largely OK now, but generally will be running far below normal by the end of the summer.

The state's summer water supply appeared well stocked in April. May, however, was the second warmest and 12th driest on record. Streams that were swelled by rain and melting snow in the



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Water irrigates a field in southwest Washington on June 29. The U.S. Drought Monitor

spring are falling.

Right now, Western Washington is the dry side of the state. The U.S. Drought Monitor on Thursday categorized 12 percent of the state in a moderate drought, the first time this year any part of the state has been considered to be in a drought. The drought covers all or parts of 11 westside counties south of Seattle.

Most of Eastern Washington remains far from drought conditions.

Washington State Climatologist Nick Bond said Friday he expects the rest of the summer to be warmer than usual, though not as hot as 2015, the last year Washington declared a drought emergency.

Weekly fieldwork report

Ore.

Wash.

Idaho

Calif.

Item/description <small>(Source: USDA, NASS, NOAA)</small>	Ore.	Wash.	Idaho	Calif.
• Days suitable for fieldwork (As of June 24)	6.6	6.2	5.8	6.9
• Topsoil moisture, surplus	1%	4%	13%	0
• Topsoil moisture, percent short	67%	19%	32%	75%
• Subsoil moisture, surplus	0	2%	12%	0
• Subsoil moisture, percent short	66%	16%	31%	75%
• Precipitation probability <small>(6-10 day outlook as of July 1)</small>	33-40% below	33-40% below	33-40% below	Normal/ 33% above

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