

EPA refocuses its priorities to compliance

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

While enforcement actions will continue to be a critical tool for addressing serious environmental violators and deterring violations, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is taking a different tack and transitioning to a keener focus on compliance.

In a memo to EPA regional administrators, Assistant Administrator Susan Parker Bodine said the agency is transitioning from enforcement initiatives to compliance initiatives.

A focus on compliance is the goal

and includes a broader use of compliance-assurance tools and the opportunity for enhanced state and tribal engagement, she said.

The move from enforcement to compliance builds on welcome policy changes by the Trump administration, Colin Woodall, senior vice president of government affairs for National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, said.

“Things have been steadily improving since the new administration was put in place. The underlying sentiment of rolling back regulation and working with industry remains in place,” he said.

EPA has been willing to consult

with NCBA on new or potential regulations, something industry hasn’t seen with previous administrations. NCBA has always had an adversarial relationship with previous administrations, whether they were Republican or Democrat, he said.

“We never felt they cared much about the economic impact their decisions would (have) on our industry,” he said.

And their decisions lacked a proven scientific basis, especially when it came to the cattle industry. In just about every case, NCBA disagreed with EPA’s science — and the current administration also disagrees, he said.

“The acting administrator, Andrew Wheeler, has been very vocal in his willingness to work with industry, especially NCBA,” he said.

NCBA is grateful Wheeler and his team have refocused the agency’s priorities. This action reflects beef producers’ commitment to protecting natural resources and the administration’s commitment to ensuring stakeholders and regulators work together to find solutions, he said.

“Cattlemen and cattlemen take their role as environmental stewards seriously. Now, rather than being the targets of continuous prioritized enforcement, they can finally operate on

a level playing field,” he said.

One of EPA’s priorities is preventing animal waste from contaminating surface water and groundwater. It intends to return that mission to its core program rather than keeping it as a national enforcement initiative.

In the new focus on compliance, EPA will seek state input in developing compliance goals and new ways to measure progress and success. The agency welcomes state and tribal participation in implementing compliance initiatives, she said. The implementation strategies will identify tools for achieving the goals.

Food Producers of Idaho, county fair honor farm families

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Food Producers of Idaho partnered with the Twin Falls County Fair to recognize four farm and ranch families in the Magic Valley region of south-central Idaho.

This year’s Featured Farm Families in the region are L. Ray Stanger Sons, 4 Open A Farm, Matthews Land and Cattle, and R&S Pearson Farms. Poster-style biographies of each farm were displayed in the Twin Falls County Farm Bureau Ag Pavilion at the recent fair.

Food Producers of Idaho created the program to recognize farm and ranch families in the Magic Valley for their legacy and investment in Idaho agriculture, FPI Executive Director Rick Waitley said.

“Through the years, we have seen outstanding community leaders selected,” he said. “These are hardworking families, often representing several generations who are not only good agriculturalists, but are engaged and invested in their communities. Many of the winners have been involved in 4-H, FFA, local schools, athletic programs and in community service projects helping to build a better Idaho.”

Honorees also “represent a very wide diversity of Idaho



Courtesy of Matthews Land and Cattle

Members of the Matthews family near Oakley, Idaho. The family was one of four that were honored by the Food Producers of Idaho and the Twin Falls County Fair.

agriculture,” he said.

L. Ray Stanger Sons is a third-generation family farm near Murtaugh. The 3,000-acre farm now produces beets, corn, wheat, barley and alfalfa using new irrigation technology featuring variable-speed drivers on pivots.

Tracy and Nan Stanger run the farm, in operation for nearly 70 years, with two of their sons. They partner with Tracy’s brother, Randy, and Randy’s wife, Tamara. FPI said the Stangers hire and buy locally, and have been

involved in local organizations including schools, civic organizations and advisory boards.

Wayne and Samantha Anderson of 4 Open A Farm have been involved in production agriculture in the Twin Falls area since 1994. They operate a 100-head commercial Angus herd and grow silage corn, malt barley and alfalfa hay on the 420-acre operation.

FPI said the Andersons — known for taking great pride in caring for their animals,

crops and equipment — have from the outset worked to improve their irrigation system, moving from flood to pivot and establishing a reputation for keeping ditches clean and in top operating condition. They buy inputs locally, and buy bulls and sell beef in the area. Samantha Anderson has been involved in several organizations at local and state levels, and is a Leadership Idaho Agriculture graduate.

Matthews Land and Cattle, near Oakley, grows sugar beets, potatoes, silage and

dry corn, alfalfa hay and malt barley on 2,700 acres. Twenty-five pivots irrigate the farm. Eugene Matthews, involved with the farm for 40 years, oversees the current business with sons Blake primarily responsible for farming and shop operations, and Broden and Brandon overseeing 900 head of mother cows and 3,000 yearlings.

Broden operates Three Bar Cattle, a Matthews subsidiary with a feedlot for 6,000 head of cattle. The family has been involved in community organizations and events, schools and youth agriculture organizations.

R&S Pearson Farms near Buhl has 1,000 acres of hay, grain and potatoes. Owners Rick and Susan Pearson have owned and operated the farm for more than 20 years. FPI said they are dedicated to growth and innovation, and have partnered with local farmers to improve farms and aid in expanding their operation. They are active in the Idaho Farm Bureau.

Susan is an elementary school teacher. Rick, a Leadership Idaho Agriculture graduate, serves on the Idaho Hay and Forage Association board and is a past winner in the National Wheat Foundation yield contest.

The Pearsons support the Idaho Ag in the Classroom program.

ODA wants feasibility study on combining laboratories

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Agriculture is considering whether to put all of its laboratories under one roof.

The agency wants to fund a study on whether combining the facilities is feasible, and will likely seek the money for that analysis during the 2019 session.

ODA maintains five testing and inspection facilities: an animal health lab at ODA headquarters in Salem, a plant pathology lab, an insect testing program, a weights and measures lab, and the department’s first and largest lab, the Food Innovation Center in Portland.

Lauren Henderson, the department’s assistant director, says testing has become more complicated and more rigid since the Food Innovation Center opened in 1999.

For example, the state now requires that legal cannabis products be tested for certain contaminants, including pesticides.

While certified private labs perform the required testing, if those labs find a certain contaminant outside the allowable range in a cannabis sample, ODA investigates.

“Times have changed and the complexities have changed, and cannabis was just one more piece of work that, in the current space and the footprint we have, if we try to add that, it’s just going to be harder to do because we frankly don’t have the room to add any more equipment really up in the Portland area,” Henderson said. “So we want to look at a bigger footprint to put all of our labs.”

Centralizing the labs could mean certain processes could be more efficient, and it may require fewer administrative staff like receptionists or managers, Henderson said.

Henderson says they want to request about \$200,000 for the feasibility study, which is expected to take 10 to 12 months, in the state’s next two-year budget, which begins in mid-2019.

Dalton Thomas, Washington fruit export pioneer, honored in Asia

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — Dalton Thomas, a leader in the Washington tree fruit industry, was recognized for his “pioneering contribution” in developing U.S. fresh fruit exports to Asia at the Asiafruit Congress in Hong Kong on Sept. 4.

Thomas retired a year ago as president of Oneonta Starr Ranch Growers, which was founded by his late father, Paul “Tommy” Thomas, in 1934 as the first exporter of Washington apples.

It was during the Great Depression and Tommy Thomas traded a boat load of apples into Europe for a half load of tires and nails that he sold in the U.S.

Dalton Thomas worked a year as a USDA fruit and vegetable inspector before joining quality control and then the sales desk of his father’s Wenatchee-based company in 1966. The younger Thomas became president in the 1970s and opened Washington apple exports to Asia in 1972 with the first shipment to Taiwan. He also led the way into Indonesia and other Asian markets.



Oneonta Starr Ranch Growers

Dalton Thomas, center, with the award the Asiafruit Congress presented him. From left are Chris White, Asiafruit Congress; Brett Reasor, Oneonta CEO; Scott Marboe, Oneonta marketing director; Linda Rabadan, Oneonta export sales assistant; Steve Reinholt, Oneonta export sales director; and Xue Lanjie, Oneonta Beijing office.

began handling their own exports. Oneonta shifted from being 65 percent export and 35 percent domestic sales to 70 percent domestic and 30 percent export, the same as other companies today.

“We are still selling to the same companies that Dalton

pioneered in the ’70s and ’80s in the Middle East and Asia,” Marboe said.

Todd Fryhover, president of the Washington Apple Commission in Wenatchee, said he met Thomas in 1985 as a competitor salesman for another company and soon

respected Thomas as “the best export sales person in the industry bar none.”

Later, when Fryhover was commission president and Thomas was a commissioner, Fryhover said he enjoyed watching Thomas when industry members welcomed importers on trade missions.

“My job was complete with introductions and I sat back and watched the interaction. I’ve never seen anyone work a room better than Dalton. He meets everyone in the room and comes away with orders for fruit,” Fryhover said.

Asiafruit Congress is a 20-year-old annual conference for fresh fruit and vegetable producers and marketers. Thomas received its first Impact Award for his “pioneering contribution to developing Washington and U.S. fresh fruit exports to Asia.”

A Chilean cherry committee, an Indian importer and Indonesian retailer also were honored.

Thomas’ sons, Brad and Jimmy, are now president and vice president, respectively, of Oneonta Starr Ranch Growers. Brett Reasor is CEO. The family also owns Custom Apple Packers, also in Wenatchee.

Oneonta sells about 15 million boxes of apples annually with 1.3 million of that organic. It sells about 2 million boxes of cherries, 2 million boxes of pears and 500,000 boxes of stone fruit. It also sells table grapes, citrus and other commodities to domestic and international customers.

Among the companies it sells for, besides itself and Custom, are Gilbert Orchards and Columbia Reach, both in Yakima, Davis Orchards in Milton-Freewater, Ore., and Diamond Fruit in Odell, Ore.

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Come see us soon!

Fun Fact: Dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers create large reservoirs that allow barges to navigate more than 465 miles from the Pacific Ocean to Lewiston, Idaho.

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(541) 481-7243 • www.visitsage.com

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