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Brad Carlson/Capital Press
Jack Holmes checks panels that are part of a solar-power system at his five-acre property outside Weiser, Idaho.

RURAL POWER SURGE

Agricultural land continues to attract alternative energy development

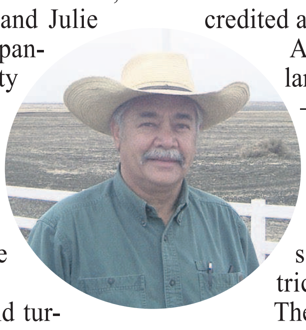
By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

At their 5-acre spread outside Weiser, Idaho, retired ranchers Jack and Julie Holmes have installed solar panels to offset their electricity costs.

"We made the decision to do it based on the economics of it," Jack Holmes said. "Our decision wasn't based on environmental activism or tax rebates. It was a long-term decision to improve our property."

About 100 miles to the south, a wind turbine on John Steiner's farming and grazing operation near Oreana reduces his irrigation pumping costs by up to 20 percent — a fact he's happy to share with others. He and partners help build wind turbines on other farms and ranches.

"Demand is created by that customer's use," he said, referring to net metering programs in which an alternative energy project's power generation is credited against the farm's power consumption.



Courtesy of Lorna Steiner
John Steiner at the Bennett Creek wind farm near Mountain Home, Idaho.

Although the growth in the number of large alternative energy developments — including solar, wind and specialty hydro-electric power — has dropped substantially in Idaho during the last few years, farmers and ranchers are still carving out a niche with small-scale projects that help offset their electricity use.

The drop in new large projects came after the state Legislature in 2011 did away with a seven-year-old sales tax break and the state Public Utilities Commission tightened power contracting requirements. But even after those changes the federal Public Utilities Regulatory Policies Act

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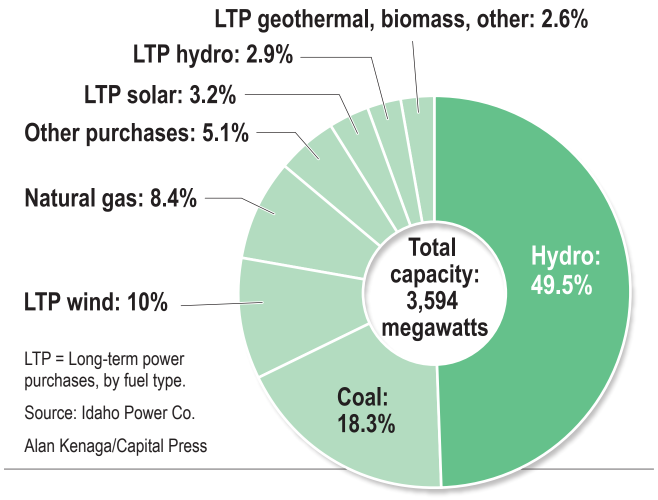
Idaho Power Co. sources of power

Estimated fuel mix, including market purchases, 2017.



LTP = Long-term power purchases, by fuel type.
Source: Idaho Power Co.
Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

> "Our decision wasn't based on environmental activism or tax rebates. It was a long-term decision to improve our property."
>
> — **Jack Holmes**, retired Idaho rancher

Lost Valley problems likely to spur dairy regulatory changes

Work group plans to propose dairy legislation for 2019 session

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

The wastewater problems at a controversial Oregon dairy will likely result in proposed changes to how such facilities are regulated during next year's legislative session.

Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, chairman of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, said during a Sept. 25 hearing that he'd be assembling a work group to propose legislation based on "lessons learned" from Lost Valley Farm of Boardman, Ore.

Dembrow said he wants to take steps to prevent a similar situation from happening again, referring to the large dairy's repeated violations of wastewater rules since starting in April 2017.

E.J. Harris/EO Media Group File
The Lost Valley Dairy outside Boardman, Ore., has sparked legislative discussions about how large dairies are regulated in Oregon.

So far in 2018, the dairy has been fined more than $10,000 by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, which later sought to shut down the facility with a lawsuit. That litigation was settled, but during the summer ODA filed another complaint accusing owner Greg te Velde of contempt of court for violat-

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ing the agreement's terms. The agency is also moving to revoke his "confined animal feeding operation" permit for the dairy.

A judge found te Velde in contempt and has ordered him to take remedial actions to prevent further manure lagoon overflows and other problems this winter. Meanwhile, te Velde filed for bankruptcy to prevent a forced auction of his dairy herd, but the judge in that case has appointed a U.S. government trustee to oversee his assets, citing his spending unauthorized funds on gambling. Last week, te Velde was arrested in Hermiston, Ore., and charged with methamphetamine possession.

Alexis Taylor, ODA's director, testified that overseeing the troubled dairy has proved expensive for the agency.

Normally, inspecting the dairy three or four times a year would have cost the ODA about $2,600 if it hadn't run into non-compliance issues, she said.

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New South Korea trade deal protects agricultural interests

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

With $6.9 billion in agricultural exports to South Korea hanging in the balance, U.S. producers got reassurance on Monday that a renegotiated trade agreement with the Asian nation would not harm exports.

While commodity groups were confident with an agreement in principle reached in March, signing of the revised U.S.-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement — known as KORUS — brought the safeguards home.

The signing comes more than a year after President Donald Trump threatened

Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press File
A dry bulk vessel is loaded with wheat at the Columbia Grain facility in Portland, Ore., bound for South Korea. The revamped KORUS trade treaty maintains zero-tariff access to that market for U.S. wheat and several other commodities.

to withdraw from the agreement, which went into effect in 2012 and nearly doubled agricultural exports to South Korea from $3.5 billion.

The revisions primarily focus on U.S. automobile exports, but agricultural groups were worried a new agreement could strip away their gains in market access that made South Korea the sixth-largest export market for U.S. farmers and ranchers.

Leading U.S. exports to South Korea are beef at $1.2 billion in 2017, corn at $705 million, fresh fruit at $490 million, pork at $475 million and wheat at $328 million.

"Renewal of our trade deal with South Korea is much-needed good news and help for our farmers and ranchers as the agricultural economy struggles," Zippy Duvall, President of American Farm Bureau Federation, said in a statement.

He also encouraged the administration to push for conclusion of other trade agreements and removing barriers in other parts of Asia and to rejoin the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

National Cattlemen's Beef Association said KORUS tore down trade barriers to South Korea, now the second-largest export market for U.S. beef.

"KORUS is a prime example of how U.S. producers benefit from trade agreements that reduce tariffs and implement science-based standards," Kevin Kester, NCBA president, said in a statement.

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