

# Voluntary plans to preserve farming in place

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press



**John Stuhlmiller**

Voluntary guidelines for protecting wetlands, wildlife habitat and other environmentally sensitive ground are now in place in the 27 Washington counties that opted into what's billed as an incentive-based, farm-friendly option to the Growth Management Act.

The State Conservation Commission recently approved the last of the work plans submitted by counties. The plans are an alternative to county ordinances that could have imposed large,

uniform vegetation buffers between farms and water.

Farmers can participate, or not, by conferring with conservation districts.

Washington Farm Bureau CEO John Stuhlmiller said he hopes they will.

"This has the potential to provide a very long-lasting benefit to ag, while protecting the environment," he said. "It could change the landscape forever."

The Voluntary Stewardship Program has been about a dozen years in the making. It stems from the conflict that arose between agriculture and the 1990 GMA's command that counties protect sensitive environmental areas.

Counties were required to adopt rules to comply with the law, and farmers in some counties faced losing the use of large chunks of their property to mandatory setbacks from water.

The Legislature in 2007 put a moratorium on new county restrictions and let farm groups, environmental organizations, counties

and Native American tribes try to work out their differences. The talks led to lawmakers in 2011 giving counties the option of developing plans that seek to maintain or enhance agriculture, wetlands and habitat in their current condition. Twelve counties, despite urging from the Farm Bureau, opted to not participate.

The plans were years in the making. Instead of what farm groups deride as "big, dumb buffers," the stewardship program relies on farmers working with conservation districts to protect watersheds.

The State Conservation

Commission has presented a two-year, \$9.9 million budget proposal to implement and monitor the plans.

"The real exciting part is these plans are truly non-regulatory," Stuhlmiller said. "No farm can be forced to do anything."

The voluntary program does not change other laws. If conditions degrade in a watershed, a county can ask state and federal agencies to crack down, according to state law.

The program, however, assures farmers that maintaining the environmental conditions that existed on

July 22, 2011, are what's expected of them.

"That is a big deal — to give ag that certainty," Stuhlmiller said. "We're going to show, 'Hey, ag really does do good things.'"

The counties that opted into the Voluntary Stewardship Program are: Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Cowlitz, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Grays Harbor, Kittitas, Lewis, Lincoln, Mason, Okanogan, Pacific, Pend Oreille, San Juan, Skagit, Spokane, Stevens, Thurston, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima,

# WSDA to spray 1,700 acres for gypsy moths

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

A pesticide will be sprayed from the air over 1,700 acres in Western Washington next spring to kill gypsy moth caterpillars, according to a plan announced Dec. 19 by the state Department of Agriculture.

The department plans to spray 699 acres at Martha Lake in Snohomish County, 270 acres on Union Hill-Novelty Hill in King County and 299 acres in Gilberton and 438 acres in Crosby in Kitsap County.

European gypsy moths were trapped last summer for the third year in a year in Gilberton and Crosby, and for the second straight year in Union Hill-Novelty Hill, east of Redmond.

The spraying at Martha



WSDA  
**European gypsy moth larvae feed on trees and shrubs. The state Department of Agriculture will spray a pesticide to kill newly hatched caterpillars.**

Lake, just east of Interstate 5 and north of Seattle, was motivated by the capture of a single Asian gypsy moth.

Asian gypsy moths are potentially more dangerous.

They feed more readily on evergreen trees and have a greater range. Female Asian gypsy moths can fly, while female European gypsy moths are flightless. Before

this summer, an Asian gypsy moth had not been found in Washington since 2015.

"It's the standard response to Asian gypsy moths — to spray for even one," department spokeswoman Karla Salp said.

If the department needed another reason, the capture of a European gypsy moth nearby provided one. Salp said the department is concerned about cross-breeding between the Asian and European strains. The department in 2016 found one gypsy moth that had cross-bred, she said.

Gypsy moth caterpillars feed on hundreds of trees and shrubs, including Christmas trees and nursery plants. They lay eggs on hard surfaces, including personal belongings that are unwittingly transported across the country.

Gypsy moths are established in many Eastern and Midwest states, but have not settled in the West. Gypsy moths were first detected in Washington in 1974. Since then, the agriculture department has trapped for moths in the summer to detect outbreaks and sprayed in the spring as caterpillars emerge.

In all, the department this year snared the one Asian gypsy moth and 51 European gypsy moths in 10 counties, all west of the Cascades.

The spraying will occur over populated and forested areas. The department said it will host open houses in the areas to answer questions from the public.

The department expects to spend \$620,000 on the operation. The state will get three-quarters of the money from the USDA.

The department trapped nine European gypsy moths in Gilberton, six on Union Hill-Novelty Hill and four in Crosby.

# Economist: China tiff about more than trade

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press



**Desmond O'Rourke**

PULLMAN, Wash. — More observers are beginning to realize the U.S.-China trade war isn't about trade but who controls the world, says a retired Washington State University agricultural economist who once headed a USDA-sponsored China study group.

The U.S. has the economic power to win its trade war with China but lacks the political perseverance, and trade between the two countries is unlikely to improve in the next two years, says Desmond O'Rourke, now a private consultant and apple analyst.

O'Rourke first went to China in 1980 and visited often as director of WSU's IMPACT Center for international marketing in the 1990s. He worked with members of the Washington Council on International Trade, the Washington China Relations Council and the World Affairs Council on China.

At WSU, O'Rourke set up a USDA-sponsored China study group that included economists from the U.S., Canada and Europe. It's now an official interest group within the American Applied Economic Association, the national body for agricultural economists.

As a private consultant, O'Rourke issued special studies on China in 2002, 2004 and 2013 and studied the Chinese produce distribution system for Produce Marketing Association. When the Washington apple industry was excited about full varietal access to China in 2015, O'Rourke warned China was "extremely unreliable" and might not be the panacea it appeared for apples, citrus, nuts, hay, beef and a host of other commodities.

Those commodities hurt by current tariffs, including apples and cherries, can expect little to no relief for the next two years as President Donald Trump holds firm and China simply waits for his presidency to end, whether that's two or six years, O'Rourke, who turned 80 Dec. 15, said.

China might say some positive things or begin to buy soybeans again, as it is now when it needs them, but it says one thing and does another, he said.

The U.S. was too lax for years regarding China's unfair trading practices and intellectual theft, O'Rourke said. It only emboldened China to get away with more, he said.

The U.S. and European establishments were "terrified" when Trump stood up to China but has gradually become more supportive, realizing the magnitude of China's transgressions, O'Rourke said.

"Trump made the comment we didn't start a trade war. China has been running one for 30 years," he said.

China's militarization to control the international trade route of the South China Sea worries Japan and other neighbors that believe China is getting too strong and threatening, he said.

China's Belt and Road Initiative to increase its connectivity, investment and trading into Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe worries the West and China's use of its Huawei telecommunications equipment and technology to spy on other countries "has brought people to support Trump and realize it's not all about tariffs but who controls the world," O'Rourke said.

"People are putting all of these things together and saying China has to be slowed in some way, but no one knows what the next action should be. We can kick them out of the WTO (World Trade Organization), but it might not have any impact," he said.

Ironically, more Democrats may side with Trump on China than Republicans, O'Rourke said. "Republicans want free trade and Democrats now want to tie trade to the environment, social welfare and gender equality," he said.

"U.S. Apple Association has been very critical of Trump's policies and been among the loudest commodity groups saying, 'We didn't ask for these tariffs and don't want them.' It's a short-term view," O'Rourke said.

Soybeans have been hit harder but are more supportive and wheat has been patient, but such groups could flip very fast, he said.

"We don't have the political unity to put up with the pain for long-term gain," he said. "The odds are politically, we won't have staying power. As long as the communists control China what the government says happens. Our government is a constantly moving coalition."

O'Rourke said he thinks a Northwest Horticultural Council estimated loss of \$129 million apple sales this season to Mexico, India and China is "very soft" because it doesn't account for sales shifting to other markets.

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