

Idaho considers compliance extension for underground tanks

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

Idaho fuel vendors would get more time to comply with federal regulations governing underground storage tanks under a proposal that backers say helps rural operators.

The Idaho House Environment, Energy & Technology Committee in late January endorsed, and recommended the state Legislature pass, House Bill 26. The bill would extend the compliance deadline by three years to Oct. 13, 2021.

Recent Environmental Protection Agency rules require tank components to be inspected to make sure they remain safe and in good working order. The agency set Oct. 13, 2018, as the compliance deadline but allowed states to which it granted administrative authority, including Idaho, to set their own deadlines.

Although the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality cooper-

ates with fuel vendors who missed the original deadline but are working to comply, the extension is needed because the tight supply of specialized workers and equipment substantially reduces availability, HB 26 supporters said. The bill also would help make sure insurance for environmental cleanup stays in force.

“With every successive generation of rules, we see tanks pulled out of operation,” said Suzanne Budge of the Idaho Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association, which initiated the bill. It’s a problem industrywide, “and it’s a problem for rural areas.”

Dennis Campo of Campo & Poole Distributing, which has operations in Fruitland, Idaho, and Ontario, Ore., told the committee that his systems comply but that some of the vendors he supplies could not meet the original deadline.

A short supply of materials and

workers to meet strong demand means prices are up, and “the vendors doing the repairs are not getting around as fast as they need to, to get to everybody,” Campo said. For small operators, prices are high relative to the amount of fuel sold.

Costs for testing and equipment also increased in Idaho because workers have been racing to meet the current deadline, said Charley Jones, president of the Boise-based Stinker chain of 105 convenience stores in two states.

“If we pull back the implementation date, the work can be done, and at a reasonable cost,” he said.

The extension likely would help to moderate prices and increase service availability in the long run, benefiting small and rural fuel sellers in particular, Jones said.

EPA in 1998 required equipment such as spill buckets, sumps and overfill devices be installed on underground tank systems. The new

rules, which Idaho enacted in March 2017 after EPA first proposed them in 2012, require this equipment to be tested at intervals.

Idaho DEQ, which publicized and developed training on the new rules starting in 2013, now typically tests the equipment every three years.

“Since the (October 2018) deadline, we have taken a flexible approach,” Idaho DEQ underground tank program manager Kristi Lowder said. “When we conduct an inspection at a facility that has not had the inspection or test completed, we work with the owner to come to a mutually agreeable time frame to complete the inspection and testing.”

DEQ estimates 62 percent of tanks already comply with the new rules, she said.

Farm and residential tanks with capacities of 1,100 gallons or less of motor fuel are exempt, as are tanks storing heating oil for on-site consumption.

Global cherry health research considered

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

YAKIMA, Wash. — Sweet cherry industry representatives from several nations will discuss collaboration on health research at Fruit Logistica in Berlin.

B.J. Thurlby, president of Northwest Cherry Growers and the Washington State Tree Fruit Commission in Yakima, said he and cherry growers in Chile called for the meeting to see if cherry growers in other countries are willing to pool funding for research promoting health benefits of cherries.

Cherry growers from Argentina, United Kingdom, Spain, Greece, South Africa, Turkey and Poland were invited to an informal gathering Feb. 7 during Fruit Logistica. About 78,000 people and 3,200 exhibitors usually attend the annual fresh produce trade show.

Northwest Cherry Growers, the promotional arm of the Northwest cherry industry, the Washington Apple Commission and Pear Bureau Northwest share a booth at the show.

Thurlby said he’s never seen any global research on health benefits of cherries. He spoke to about 400 growers in Chile last April. The Chilean Fresh Fruit Association was interested and Chile has seen a big benefit from health research on blueberries, he said.

“My board sees health research as a critical thing we can bring to the table in the Northwest,” Thurlby said. “If we could get a global group together that could agree on a specific message, we would end up with a strong health benefit. The goal would be to utilize the same message.”

The challenge will be a funding mechanism but more funding for more research could result in dissemination of findings faster and more broadly to benefit all, he said.

Northwest Cherry Growers spends \$200,000 to \$300,000 per year on health research and other countries each spend on their own, he said.

Northwest research has shown cherries are a natural source of antioxidants and are rich in cyanidins, a key ingredient in lowering cancer risk. Further, that cherries contain anti-inflammatory compounds that relieve arthritis pain and are loaded with melatonin, the body’s natural sleep aid.

Washington bills ask for more controlled burns to control fires

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — A northeast Washington lawmaker has proposed constructing fuel breaks on public lands to keep wildfires from rolling along until they run into something like a road or river.

The breaks, made by controlled burns or thinning vegetation before fires start, would give firefighters a place to make a stand, Rep. Joel Kretz, R-Wauconda, said Jan. 31.

“I just don’t want to concede the whole forest,” he said. “Sometimes we don’t have a highway for 50 miles.”

Kretz’s legislation, House Bill 1784, is one of several wildfire-related bills introduced after another summer of fire and smoke.

Wildfires burned about 440,000 acres in 2018, according to the Department of Natural Resources. The smoke from Washington fires combined with smoke from California, Oregon and Canada to cause public health agencies to warn Puget Sound residents about poor air.

Gov. Jay Inslee has cited



Kittitas County Sheriff's Office

Washington legislators are considering measures to reduce fuel loads and create fire breaks.

the smoke and ash on cars in the state’s biggest cities as a consequence of climate change and a reason to mandate cuts in the amount of fossil fuels used to power vehicles and heat homes.

State laws generally favor air quality over controlled burns. Lawmakers, however, have set goals for reducing fire hazards in forests. Kretz’s bill would add to a state law that directs

the Department of Natural Resources to thin a million acres by 2033. The bill has not yet had a hearing.

A fire-prevention bill heard Jan. 31 by the Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources and Parks Committee would allow outdoor burning for the public’s healthy, safety and welfare, including in and near towns.

DNR said it supported

the bill and removing barriers to controlled burns to reduce fire hazards. Stevens County Commissioner Wes McCart, whose northeast Washington county has been hard hit by wildfires, said the bill was “fantastic.”

The Department of Ecology and Puget Sound Clean Air Agency said they are fine with controlled burns, but questioned the bill’s broad language. Sen. Chris-

tine Rolfes, D-Bainbridge Island, said she was concerned that loosening rules on outdoor burning will be exploited by developers.

“I’m supportive of the forest health component, but not of the component that’s simply making it cheaper for people to clear land,” she said.

The skies also were hazy last summer in Eastern Washington, where homes and rangeland are a concern, too. An analysis for the U.S. Forest Service last year identified the 50 Washington communities where homes are mostly likely to be burned by wildfire. All 50 were east of the Cascades.

The city of Roslyn in Kittitas County has been frustrated in thinning a 330-acre forest owned by the city, said Chris Martin, the fire department’s emergency management coordinator.

“That forestland badly needs to be burned,” he told the committee. “It’s a scary proposition to have houses on one side of the street and forests on the other and be told you can’t use the best tool available to reduce that risk.”

Oregon hazelnut industry targets domestic markets

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

SALEM — As the number of mature hazelnut trees is expected to double in Oregon over the next three to four years, industry leaders are focused on building domestic markets for the crop beyond Nutella.

Patrick Gabrish, vice president of sales and marketing for Hazelnut Growers of Oregon, said there is reason for growers to be confident about sales. He pointed to several statistics during a presentation Jan. 16 at the Northwest Ag Show in Salem, Ore., indicating that Oregon hazelnuts can thrive in U.S. restaurants and supermarkets.

“It’s a great opportunity for us to build on this over the coming years as the crop continues to grow,” Gabrish said, noting that the increase in supply will help to stabilize price and demand.

Oregon grows 99 percent of all U.S. hazelnuts, with farmers harvesting 37,000 acres in 2017, according to the USDA. Hazelnut Growers of Oregon, a member-owned co-op representing 150 hazelnut growers, is bracing for another 38,000 acres of orchards to reach maturity within the next few years.

The challenge, Gabrish said, is getting hazelnuts on par with almonds, cashews and pistachios in the minds of American consumers.

“We have to do a better job as an industry of having Americans understand the health benefits,” he said. “Taste is not a significant barrier to increasing con-



Amy Wood

sumption. ... I firmly believe that if people in Europe enjoy hazelnuts, then people in the U.S. will enjoy them just as much.”



Patrick Gabrish

from a small, niche brand to ubiquity in the American food sector.

Speaking to a crowd at the Nut Growers Society 2019 Winter Meeting on Jan. 17 at Oregon State University, Wood said they are already making connections with high-profile national brands such as Kellogg’s, along with local favorites like Tillamook and Bob’s Red Mill.

Wood said Oregon hazelnuts can take a page from marketing campaigns for veggies like kale and cauliflower, which managed to change old perceptions and are now a popular and trendy ingredient. The first step to getting to that point, she said, is getting Oregon hazelnuts in the hands of top chefs and specialty food producers — what she described as “influencing the influencers.”

“All we need to do is meet with these influencers at the right time, at the right place,” Wood said.

Over the last six months, FLM Harvest has brought Oregon hazelnuts to the Feast Portland food and drink festival, as well as the Retail Confectioners International fall conference in Portland. Eliot’s Adult Nut Butters, a Portland-based producer, has already started

making a hazelnut spread that has started popping up on store shelves, including Safeway.

That was a remarkably quick turnaround, Wood said. Most larger companies typically require two to three years of research and development before they launch a new product. By 2022, she believes they can elevate the profile of Oregon hazelnuts on a national scale.



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