



Jonathan Richards

Zippy Duvall, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, welcomed farmers to the organization's virtual convention for 2021, which began Jan. 10.

FARM BUREAU HOLDS STEADY DESPITE POLITICAL SHIFT

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press



FARM BUREAU®

Despite the upcoming shift in political power at the national level, the American Farm Bureau Federation expects to remain plugged into top-level policy discussions about COVID-19 relief and other issues facing agriculture.

The organization's president, Zippy Duvall, recounted AFBF's accomplishments under the Trump administration during the Jan. 10 online commencement of the group's annual convention — including the disbursement of billions of dollars in farm aid, reduced taxes, updated trade deals and regulatory reforms.

"We have made the most of our time," Duvall said.

Even so, the organization is well prepared for

ADDITIONAL COVERAGE ON PAGE 4

the new make-up of Congress and the change in presidential administrations, he said.

"Folks, let me assure you, it's still our time," Duvall said. "Farm Bureau has built strong relationships with every administration, every Congress, and we're already building those relationships again to continue to be the strong national voice of agriculture."

On Jan. 11, the Farm Bureau's congressional advocates are scheduled to expand on the

"new challenges and opportunities" facing farmers, now that both the presidency and both chambers of Congress will be controlled by Democrats.

The theme of the organization's 2021 virtual convention — "Stronger Together" — was chosen before the coronavirus pandemic hit the U.S., Duvall said. "Little did we know how appropriate that theme would be."

Disruptions to the food chain from the pandemic

See Farm Bureau, Page 11

Oregon irrigators gain access to Willamette dam water



Corps of Engineers

The Lookout Point Dam on the Middle Fork Willamette River is one of 13 in Oregon's Willamette Basin. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has won Congressional approval to allocate 1.6 million acre-feet stored annually behind the dams among irrigators, cities and fish.

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Farmers, under new federal law, have gained access to about 328,000 acre-feet of water stored behind 13 dams in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

However, they'd be wise to wait until further regulatory processes are finished before installing irrigation structures to take advantage of the newly available water, experts say.

"We're not going to encourage people to invest money on-the-ground until we have a better sense of what we're talking about long-term here," said Mary Anne Cooper, vice president of public policy with the Oregon Farm Bureau.

Congress approved a plan to split

nearly 1.6 million acre-feet of water in Willamette Valley reservoirs among irrigators, cities and in-stream flows in a broader, \$1.4 trillion spending bill that became law in the final days of 2020.

The legislation contains several caveats that are subject to different interpretations among the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which developed the plan, and various groups that will compete for the water.

Irrigators are allocated 327,650 acre-feet under the plan, while municipal and industrial users get 160,000 acre-feet. More than 1.1 million acre-feet will be dedicated to fish and wildlife purposes, but the exact amounts are subject to revision based on regulatory findings.

The water's division between agri-

cultural, municipal and environmental purposes has been undefined for more than two decades while the Corps navigated legal obstacles, so the Congressional affirmation of its reallocation plan is a major step forward.

Even so, the specifics of how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will administer the water — especially when reservoir levels are lower than normal — remains ambiguous and will require clarification, Cooper said.

"It's one of the most complex water management issues we've seen statewide," she said. "You'd need a crystal ball to accurately predict the future."

While the recent federal legislation

See Irrigators, Page 11

Timberland owners face challenges after 2020 fires

Timberland owners face seedling, labor and equipment shortages after 2020 fires

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

Timberland owners across the West are facing a hard winter as they struggle to replant millions of acres of burned trees after 2020's devastating fire season.

The work is hard every year; workers shovel, climb rough terrain and hack cold ground while carrying sacks of 100 seedlings around their waists. This year, fire damage presents even greater challenges, including seedling, labor and equipment



Rayonier

Companies and individual landowners face challenges replanting timberlands after 2020's devastating fires.

shortages.

"The fires are having major ripple effects," said Cindy Mitchell, senior director of public affairs at the Washington Forest Protection Association.

California's fires burned more than 4 million acres of forestland last year, according to officials.

In Oregon, according to the state Department of Forestry, more than 1

million acres were scorched, including at least 250,000 acres of industrial forestland.

Clearing debris has been difficult — made more so by the fact that many logging companies lost equipment, with equipment losses ranging from \$200,000 to \$1.5 million apiece.

Timber companies are also facing a major labor crisis.

The shortage is not as critical as it was last summer when President Trump's immigration ban capped the number of H-2B work visas; industry groups have since won an exemption.

But Tim O'Hara, director of governmental affairs at the Forest Resources Association, said national demand for forestry workers is intensifying, especially after the fires. He estimated that for fiscal year 2021,

See Timberland, Page 11

