

Farm Bureau: Duvall says he's ready to 'get to a new normal'

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forced farmers to dump milk and plow under vegetables, which prompted the Farm Bureau to cooperate with USDA on "farm to family" food boxes that were distributed to millions of people, he said.

The organization also worked to ensure that COVID-19 restrictions didn't bar the entry of farm workers into the U.S. and helped secure

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Zippy Duvall, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation

funding for personal protective equipment and expanded housing for employees, he said.

The nationwide network of state and county Farm Bureaus donated more than 1 million pounds of food and \$5 million to various relief

programs, Duvall said. "Isn't that impressive? I hope that it makes Farm Bureau proud, just like it does me."

Duvall noted that 2020 had been a difficult year for him personally due to the loss of "the love of my

life," his wife Bonnie, as well as a bout with COVID-19 during the summer. During these tough times, he appreciated the "outpouring of support from the Farm Bureau family."

Despite these challenges,

Duvall said he's ready to "get to a new normal" to advocate in person on behalf of AFBF on key issues, such as representing the farm industry's voice in negotiations over potential climate legislation.

Assuring a sufficient supply of farm labor and investment in broadband and agricultural research are also top priorities, he said. "Has it been a tough year? Darn right it has. But we are going to persevere just like we always do."

TIMBER

Timberland: Large companies are struggling, but industry leaders say those likely to suffer most are small woodland owners

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demand for workers is two or three times greater than supply.

Further fueling the crisis: the nation's nursery industry has nowhere near enough seedlings to replant those forests, experts say.

Large industrial companies such as Weyerhaeuser are struggling, but industry leaders say those likely to suffer most are small woodland owners.

Jim James, executive director of Oregon Small Woodlands Association, or OSWA, said about 6,300 acres of family-owned woodlands statewide burned in 2020, half of which require replanting.

That gets expensive fast, he said.

Landowners typically plant about 400 seedlings per acre. A small woodland owner who needs to reforest 80 acres, for example, may need to plant 32,000 seedlings at an average replanting cost of \$335 per acre, totaling \$26,800.

A coalition including Oregon State University Extension, the OSWA and the Oregon Department of Forestry has estimated that more than 100 million seedlings are needed to replant Oregon's small woodlands alone.

The coalition is working with the nursery industry to expand seedling production at a mass scale. But many conifer nurseries say they are already using all their available infrastructure, and most nurseries interested in growing conifers lack the necessary acreage.

Even if nurseries do scale up, it will take time before they can supply seedlings. James of the woodlands association said bare root seedlings should be planted when they are at least two years old.

This also presents a monetary challenge. Experts say the common practice is for land managers to put down a 50% deposit when they order seedlings.

"A lot of small woodland owners lack the up-front money," said James.

University, industry and agency leaders are working to secure acreage for nurseries and discuss payment models, but they say it will likely take years to "catch up."

Why is there a lumber shortage in the U.S.?

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN

Capital Press

Many parts of the U.S. are facing lumber shortages — and experts say the problem is acute in the West after 2020's devastating wildfires.

Industry experts say several events led to the lumber shortage: COVID-19 lockdown orders and closures, new safety protocols that slowed production at mills and a spike in home remodeling while Americans were quarantined followed by a massive wildfire season.

"The industry is normally like this fine-tuned machine. A lot of events (in 2020) disrupted it," said Cindy Mitchell, senior director of public affairs at the Washington Forest Protection Association, or WFPA.

Cumming Corp., an international cost consulting firm, said wildfires along the West Coast "have led to a significant spike in certain material prices."

According to the Oregon Forest and Industries Council, or OFIC, a trade group representing forestland owners and wood product manufacturers, last year's fires in Oregon alone may have killed 15 billion board-feet of timber, enough to build 1 million homes.

The National Association of Home Builders, or NAHB, reports that between mid-April and mid-September, lumber prices soared more than 170%, adding \$16,148 to the price of a typical new single-family home. Prices drifted lower at the start of fall, but



Ryan Brennecke/EO Media Group File

Experts say several factors contributed to the lumber shortage: lockdown orders, new safety protocols, a spike in home remodeling and a massive wildfire season.

they're on the rise again.

Mitchell of WFPA and Sara Duncan, spokeswoman for Oregon Forest and Industries Council, or OFIC, both said the lumber crisis was precipitated by several events.

Some Western states temporarily shut down construction work at the start of COVID-19, which in turn meant some mills had to shut down, creating a backlog.

New safety protocols within mills slowed production.

With Americans stuck at home under shutdowns, remodeling boomed and people used up much of the exist-

ing lumber supply at a time when mill production was curtailed.

Then wildfire season hit, wiping out millions of acres of timberland.

Now, demand for building materials is even higher from West Coast communities that are rebuilding after fires.

The lumber shortage has had a variety of impacts.

Construction associations have reported contractors are showing increased interest in alternative materials, such as metal framing.

Forestry leaders say higher lumber prices don't mean timberland managers are hitting it big. Instead, experts say, many timber companies are facing tight margins because they had equipment and trees destroyed in fires, higher input costs and expenses associated with labor and reforestation.

Lumber shortages also have economic consequences for fire victims.

Many U.S. insurance policies limit the timeframe a person has to rebuild a home after a fire. With limited supplies of lumber and few contractors available, many survivors may not meet their insurance rebuilding deadlines.

Some state agencies are seeking to address this. In Oregon, for example, the state Division of Financial Regulation recently negotiated agreements with several insurance companies, pushing them to extend their timelines to at least two years after the date of loss.

"The weirdness of (2020) backed up the whole forestry system," said Mitchell of WFPA.

WATER

Oregon water allocation may complicate 'live flows' irrigation

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI

Capital Press

Oregon irrigators may face complications from the commitment of about 1 million acre-feet of water behind Willamette Valley dams to in-stream environmental purposes.

Until now, state water regulators have treated water released from the 13 dams as "live flows," which can be accessed by irrigators with surface water rights in affected streams.

Under a federal plan to divvy up the 1.6 million acre-feet of water among irrigators, cities and fish, however, the Oregon Water Resources Department is expected to change its approach.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plan to allocate about 1.1 million acre-feet for fish and wildlife, 328,000 acre-feet for irrigation and 160,000 acre-feet for municipal purposes was recently enacted into federal law.

Water that's been allocated for in-stream purposes would be treated as "stored water" rather than "live flows" under the plan, meaning it may no longer be freely available for irrigation withdrawals, said Brian Posewitz, staff attorney with the Waterwatch of Oregon environmental group.

"You can protect it after it's released. Nobody else can take it," he said.

The impact on existing irrigators isn't immediate, since the change in stored water use must still undergo an administrative process overseen by OWRD.

Calculations of "live flows" versus "stored water" downstream of the dams haven't yet been conducted, so it's unknown if the re-allocation will cause water curtailments to irrigators, Posewitz said.

"Nobody has a really good handle on the extent to which that would occur," he said.

The allocation of nearly 328,000 acre-feet of water for irrigation under the federal plan is seen as a positive development of agriculture, though the Oregon Farm Bureau had sought 450,000 acre-feet for growers.

The Farm Bureau worked closely with Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastruc-



An irrigation intake pipe draws water from the Willamette River in this file photo. A recent federal re-allocation plan for water stored behind 13 Willamette Valley dams in Oregon could complicate irrigation for some farmers who rely on "live flows."

ture Committee, to include the plan in a broader 2021 appropriations bill that was approved by Congress, said Gail Greenman, the group's national affairs director.

"While the allocation isn't what the industry had hoped for, we're very appreciative of the chairman's efforts on this issue," she said.

The Farm Bureau aims to protect existing irrigators who rely on downstream water from the dams by advocating they're first in line to access stored water, said Mary Anne Cooper, the Farm

Bureau's vice president of public policy.

Only once it's clear that existing irrigators won't be negatively affected by the change should new users be allowed to benefit from the allocated stored water, she said.

Generally, the affirmation of the federal re-allocation plan means OWRD will have to more closely scrutinize the Willamette Valley's reservoir system, including live flows and stored water, Cooper said.

"The resources need to be more tightly managed," she said.

Irrigators: 'Producers need to have the belief that it will not be undone'

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authorized the Corps' reallocation plan, it also requires the agency to abide by "reasonable and prudent alternatives" developed by the National Marine Fisheries Service to protect threatened salmon and steelhead.

The planned water distribution is also contingent on a future "biological opinion" and "environmental impact statement" related to Willamette basin dam operations, which are being conducted under the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act, respectively.

Building irrigation diversions and conveyances is expensive, so such projects should be undertaken once the regulatory landscape becomes more well-established, said Gail Greenman, the Farm Bureau's national affairs director.

"Producers need to have the belief that it will not be undone," Greenman said.

Waterwatch of Oregon, an environmental group that filed a lawsuit against the reallocation, no longer opposes the plan based on language included in the federal legislation, said Brian Posewitz, the nonprofit's staff attorney.

Because the Corps must follow the "reasonable and prudent alternatives," the agency can't reduce water proportionally among irrigators, cities and fish during low water years — a key element of the plan that Waterwatch opposed, he said. Fish needs must come first in drought years, according to this interpretation of the law.

"You can't force the fish to share the pain, you have to make them a higher priority," Posewitz said.

The legislation also contains a "compromise solution" allowing water allocations to be changed by up to 10% of the total 1.6 million acre feet available, contrary to the Corps' intention to make those amounts immutable, he said.

In other words, another 160,000 acre-feet of water could be dedicated to in-stream flows, Posewitz said.

The Oregon Farm Bureau believes the possibility of a 10% adjustment also presents an opportunity for more water to be available to irrigators, Greenman said.

Despite Waterwatch's interpretation, it's not yet clear the "reasonable and prudent alternatives" will prioritize fish over other water users in the plan, added Cooper.

"There are too many complexities to be able to get a certain answer to that question," she said.