

New ag complex a giant leap forward for Chemeketa Community College

By MITCH LIES
For the Capital Press

SALEM — Since 2004, Phil LaVine, instructor in Chemeketa Community College's AgriBusiness Management Program, has taught out of modular classrooms with limited capacity.

Come next fall, providing COVID restrictions are lifted, LaVine and other CCC agricultural sciences instructors will be working out of a state-of-the-art complex that could more than double his classroom sizes.

The 20,000-square-foot signature building of the Chemeketa Agriculture Complex is expected to be open for business next month. Already, students are working in the outdoor labs adjacent to the building, which serves as a feature draw of the 8-acre complex.

And LaVine couldn't be happier.

"This is a boon for us in terms of being able to get 60 farms (150 people) in the same classroom together" for his agribusiness management program, he said.

LaVine added that he regularly has been forced to turn away farms that wanted to participate in the program.

"We've never been able to overcome the small classroom sizes," he said. "We were limited to around 15 to 20 new farms a year and we had upwards of 40 to 60 that wanted to participate."

Joleen Schilling, program chair of the college's horticulture program, said moving from her old classrooms into the new building will be like entering the 21st century.

"This is an amazing opportunity," Schilling said. "It is going to dramatically change what we can offer students and what we can offer industry."

"I think it is really going to attract more students to our program," she said. "It is creating so many different teaching opportunities, from the outside classrooms to the inside classrooms. It is creating opportu-



Mitch Lies/For the Capital Press

First year horticulture student Kahlan Fowler of Salem takes soil samples in an outdoor lab at the Chemeketa Community College's new Agriculture Complex.

nities for us to apply for grants that we probably wouldn't have been able to apply for previously, just because we have so many more resources available to us."

The complex, four years in the making, dating back to when the Oregon Legislature allocated funding for the project, is expected to serve as a hub for students, industry professionals and the community, according to Holly Nelson, Chemeketa's executive dean of Regional Education and Academic Development.

"From high school students and college partners to small family-owned farms and large grass seed companies, this will be the place for one of the Willamette Valley's largest industries to come together in one learning space," Nelson said in a press release.

In addition to state investments, grants and Chemeketa Community College funds were used to support the project.

The complex will include several outdoor laboratory areas, including an orchard, a half-acre that will be put into vegetable production, a woody ornamental lab that will be separated from the vegetable lab by a hedgerow, three hoop houses, an arboretum, a low-water xeric garden and a large bioswale that will be part of the col-

lege's classroom experience, and a greenhouse yet to be constructed that will include 3,000 square feet of growing area.

Construction of the greenhouse, which was made possible by a \$200,000 donation from Northwest Farm Credit Services, is expected to begin in June.

Plants that dot the complex's landscape "were very strategically selected," Schilling said, "so that they can be utilized in plant identification courses."

As for the 20,000-square-foot signature building, it includes three community classrooms, a science lab classroom, a lab preparation room, two conference rooms, a student resource room, faculty offices and a work area.

The work area, or open study area, comes with two garage doors that fold up to create an open-air environment on sunny days.

The complex, on the northeast corner of the Salem campus at the intersection of 45th Street and Fire Protection Way, will be open for use in May, according to LaVine, but due to COVID restrictions, won't be used for classes until the fall at the earliest.

"We now have a lot of potential for growth," LaVine said, "and I'm looking forward to it."

Idaho lawmakers hear pitch to absorb three-fourths of Oregon

By KEITH RIDLER
Associated Press

BOISE — Idaho lawmakers appeared intrigued but skeptical on April 12, when pitched a plan to lop off about three-fourths of Oregon and add it to Idaho to create what would become the nation's third-largest state geographically.

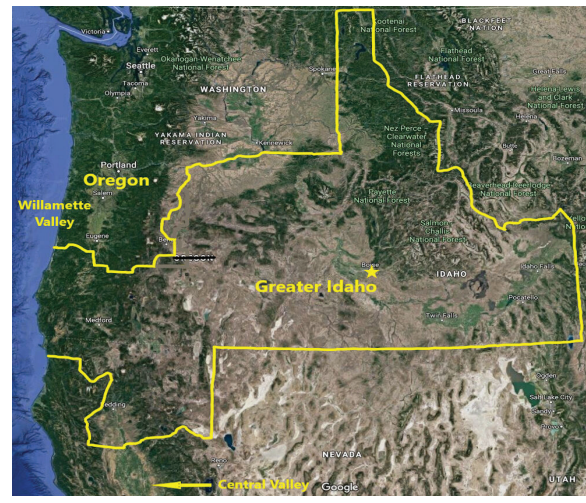
Representatives of a group called Move Oregon's Border For a Greater Idaho outlined their plan to a joint meeting of Idaho lawmakers from the House and Senate.

The Idaho Legislature would have to approve the plan that would expand Idaho's southwestern border to the Pacific Ocean. The Oregon Legislature and the U.S. Congress would also have to sign off.

Supporters of the idea said rural Oregon voters are dominated by liberal urban areas such as Portland, and would rather join conservative Idaho. Portland would remain with Oregon.

"There's a long-time cultural divide as big as the Grand Canyon between northwest Oregon and rural Oregon, and it's getting larger," Mike McCarter, president of Move Oregon's Border for a Greater Idaho, told Idaho lawmakers.

If everything falls in line with Oregon, supporters envision also adding adjacent portions of southeastern Washington and northern California to Idaho. Backers said residents in those areas also yearn for less government oversight and long to become part of a red state insulated from the liberal influence of large urban cen-



Greateridaho.org/La Grande Observer

Greater Idaho would combine parts of Oregon and California with Idaho.

ters that tend to vote Democratic.

"Values of faith, family, independence. That's what we're about," said Mark Simmons, an eastern Oregon rancher and former speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives. "We don't need the state breathing down our necks all the time, micromanaging our lives and trying to push us into a foreign way of living."

President Joe Biden easily won Washington, Oregon and California in November, while President Donald Trump carried Idaho with 64%. The Idaho House and Senate each have supermajorities of Republicans.

The group's strategy has been to get advisory votes in Oregon counties likely to make the switch. But last November the group had mixed success with two counties opting to join Idaho but two wanting to stay a part of Oregon. Supporters blamed the setback on the coronavirus pandemic and an inability to get their message out. Five more Oregon counties are expected to vote on the matter in May.

The county votes carry no weight, but are intended to potentially sway lawmakers to ultimately approve the plan.

Republican Rep. Ben Adams, one of Idaho's more conservative lawmakers who gave a fiery speech on the House floor last week revolving around freedom, said his interest was piqued but wondered why Oregon lawmakers would agree to the plan.

"How is it being received right now by the state of Oregon?" he asked. "How hard would they be fighting to make it not happen? Most states don't like to lose their resources to their neighbors."

McCarter said he's had no contact with the state government but expects supporters will make themselves known eventually.

"I believe that there are a lot of people standing on the sidelines watching this particular issue," McCarter said. "Is there any traction to it? Is there anything behind it?"

He said the votes coming up in the five counties in May could be an indicator.

High psyllid pressure expected in potato fields this year

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Washington potato farmers can expect high pressure this year from psyllids, the insects that can carry zebra chip disease, researchers say.

Potato psyllid populations fluctuate from year to year, said Rodney Cooper, temperate tree fruit and vegetable research leader for the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Wapato, Wash.

The psyllid populations that occur in potatoes in late summer correlate with psyllid populations that occur on matrimony vine, a non-native shrub, in early spring.

When researchers cannot find psyllids on matrimony vine in March, the psyllid pressure in potatoes remains low. During years researchers find psyllids on matrimony vine in March, psyllid pressure can be high in potatoes later in the summer, Cooper said.

"This year, we are seeing a very large number of potato psyllid in matrimony vine," Cooper said. "In fact, we are seeing perhaps three times more psyllids on matrimony vine than we did leading up to the 2016 potato psyllid outbreak. If 2021 follows the same trends we have seen over the last five or six years, then growers can likely expect a high psyllid pressure this year."

Matrimony vine was first brought to the Pacific Northwest by homesteaders in the late 1800s or early 1900s.

The vine is the first potato psyllid host plant to leaf out in the spring, Cooper said. Psyllids can complete at least one generation on matrimony vine before the emergence of potatoes. The plant survives the hot dry conditions of summer by going into dormancy, which forces the psyllids to disperse in



Rodney Cooper/USDA ARS

An adult potato psyllid on a leaf next to two eggs. Researchers say early psyllid populations on matrimony vine indicate increased psyllid pressure for potato farmers later in the year.

search of new host plants, including potatoes.

It appears that matrimony vine is a source of psyllids arriving in potato in the region, Cooper said. But the plant does not appear to be susceptible to the zebra chip pathogen and therefore is not a source of infective psyllids.

In fact, psyllid populations seem to lose the zebra chip pathogen when reared on matrimony vine in the laboratory, Cooper said.

"While matrimony vine might be a source of psyllids arriving in potato, matrimony vine might also be the reason why zebra chip disease is rare in our region," Cooper said. "Without matrimony vine, potato psyllids might utilize less favorable non-crop hosts that have potential to be reservoirs of the zebra chip pathogen."

Even though the region's zebra chip infection rates in psyllids are lower compared to other areas, about 1 in 10,000, years when there are more psyllids still increase the risk, said Carrie Wohleb, regional vegetable specialist.

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