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Williamson Orchards & Vineyards

Mike Williamson, center, and staff at work at Williamson Orchards & Vineyards.

WAY TO GROW

Idaho's wine industry builds on its success

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

CALDWELL, Idaho — Jay Hawkins liked what he saw. Peering into the 10-foot-deep pits he and his crew had dug in his new 32-acre vineyard, he saw just what he was looking for.

“There was sandy soil all the way to about the 10-foot level,” said Hawkins, owner-operator of Lanae Ridge Vineyard. “We had no restrictive layers.”

Also, he said, “we were digging up roots from vines we had taken out. Those old vines demonstrated they could grow very deeply.”

With that in mind, he will plant red grape varietals on the sloped site near the Snake River in southwest Idaho. They will replace the white winegrapes that had grown there nearly 43 years.

Hawkins took soil samples there and on the adjacent 33 acres he and his wife, Shelly, have owned since 2015. The latest purchase will nearly double their acreage and production of grapes.



Lanae Ridge Vineyard
Shelly and Jay Hawkins of Lanae Ridge Vineyard.

Jay Hawkins is part of a succession of Idaho vineyard growers who have helped build a wine industry in a state known more for potatoes than Pinot.

“Those original farmers endured the learning curve, and we’re all benefiting from their lessons learned,” he said.

The Idaho wine industry is rapidly expanding. The state has 69 wineries, up from 11 in 2002, said Moya Shatz

Dolsby, executive director of the Idaho Wine Commission.

Although the California, Washington and Oregon wine industries are far bigger, “there is huge interest now in the Idaho wine industry,” she said. “I am getting a lot of phone calls from people wanting to come in.”

Grape supply is one challenge for Idaho. The state currently has about 1,300 acres of grapes, the Wine Commission reports. While that’s up 40% from 2002, it hasn’t kept up with demand from wineries.

“We need more grapes in the ground because the wineries are growing,” Dolsby said. Residents want to drink locally sourced wine, “but there are not enough grapes to sustain the wineries, so the wineries are having to go to Washington” to supplement their supply.

Heather Bradshaw, the Washington State Wine Commission’s communications director, said that state now has more than 60,000 acres of vineyards.

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Idaho Wine Commission Executive Director Moya Shatz Dolsby.

How Biden's antitrust executive order could impact ag

By **SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN**
Capital Press

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Joe Biden issued a sweeping executive order July 9 on “Promoting Competition in the American Economy” aimed at reducing consolidation and increasing competition across U.S. business sectors, including agriculture.

The antitrust order will impact

several farm sectors, especially the meat industry.

“Big ag is putting a squeeze on farmers,” Biden said at a White House press briefing.

Without healthy competition, he said, a few big players can “charge whatever they want and treat you however they want” — as in the meatpacking sector, where four companies process 85% of the beef supply, according to the USDA.

The order includes 72 specific actions. Related directly to farming, the president:

- Directed USDA to consider new rules under the Packers and Stockyards Act to make it easier for farmers to bring and win claims, to stop processors from underpaying chicken producers and to adopt anti-retaliation protections for whistleblowers.
- Directed USDA to redefine

when meat can bear “Product of USA” labels to reflect where animals were actually grown and processed.

• Directed USDA to support alternative food systems such as farmers markets and small processors.

• Encouraged the Federal Trade Commission to limit powerful equipment manufacturers from restricting farmers’ ability to use

independent repair shops or do their own repairs — such as when manufacturers block farmers from repairing their own tractors.

• Directed the Federal Trade Commission to “ban or limit” the practice of businesses requiring employees to sign “non-competitive agreements,” which prohibit employees from later working for

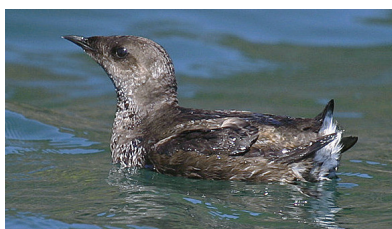
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Marbled murrelet reclassified as endangered in Oregon

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

SALEM — The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission has again voted to grant endangered species protections for the marbled murrelet, a small seabird that nests in old-growth forests along the Pacific Coast.

Environmental groups initially petitioned the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2016 to “uplist” the marbled murrelet from threatened to endangered under the state Endangered Species Act, arguing the



Courtesy Roy W. Lowe/USFWS

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to reclassify the marbled murrelet as an endangered species on July 9.

bird is in danger of going extinct. Commissioners voted in favor

of uplisting in February 2018, but abruptly changed course four months later — reversing their decision and maintaining the marbled murrelet’s classification as a threatened species.

Petitioners sued, and a Lane County Circuit Court judge ruled the commission violated state law by not providing an explanation for their sudden reversal. ODFW agreed to revisit endangered species protections for the marbled murrelet in August 2019.

While a final resolution was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the commission voted 4-3 on

July 9 to uplist the bird.

State agencies that own, manage or least lands with marbled murrelet habitat now have 18 months to develop and submit an endangered species management plan to the commission for approval. The Oregon ESA does not apply to private lands.

Conservationists cheered the outcome, saying the marbled murrelet continues to face serious threats in Oregon from climate change, ocean warming, wildfires and logging

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