

AgForestry leader to depart after six years

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Matt Kloes will leave the Washington AgForestry organization at the end of September after six years as its executive director.

Kloes will be a senior market research analyst for Northwest Farm Credit Services, where he previously worked for nine years.

"It was an incredibly difficult decision because AgForestry is so close to my heart," Kloes told the Capital Press.

Kloes graduated from the leadership program in 2015. Farm Credit sponsored him. The company is paying Kloes' salary from July through September as an "in-kind" gift of Kloes' time through the transition.

The AgForestry leadership development program lasts 18 months. It includes 11 multi-day seminars. Participants also spend one week in Washington, D.C., and up to two weeks in a foreign country.

Participant cost is \$6,000. The program spends approximately \$20,000 per participant. The cost to each participant is subsidized by partners and in-kind donations.

Kloes is proudest of how the AgForestry team navigated through the COVID-19 pandemic, which he refers to as "our fallow year." Traditional programming paused, and the program focused on improvements and a webinar series.

AgForestry was founded

WASHINGTON AGFORESTRY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

<http://agforestry.org/programs/>



Matt Kloes

in 1978. Kloes said the program must continue to recognize how the agriculture industry has evolved.

"There were a very large number of mid-sized producers," he said. "As the years have gone on, producers have been forced to get larger in scale or stay small and find a niche."

The leadership program was designed to develop future leaders who could eventually give back to it.

"The game has changed," Kloes said. "It is more difficult to find producers to participate. Some of that is being afraid a little bit of the time commitment — they are doing more with less — and also simply a game of numbers, where there are just fewer people."

The organization is looking at ways to reduce the time commitment by using online resources.

"But also, folks need to think about what AgForestry means to their development," Kloes said. "Some of it is folks needing to realize the commitment is worth the time."

A search committee has convened to find his replacement. Kloes said there's no specific timeline to bring a new leader on board.

He will continue to volunteer his time after Sept. 30. The organization's board is also in the midst of a strategic planning process.



Wikipedia

The confluence of the Walla Walla and Columbia rivers.

Stakeholders continue work on plan for Walla Walla watershed

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Stakeholders are working on priorities for the 1,760-square-mile Walla Walla River watershed identified in a strategic plan for improving the watershed over the next 29 years.

Over the last decade, stakeholders have worked to increase streamflows and protect the amount of water that farmers need, said Judith Johnson, former chair of the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership.

"What we've discovered is that, particularly in a drought situation like this year, there simply isn't enough water to meet both needs," she said.

The fact that the watershed includes stakeholders in both Oregon and Washington adds an extra level of complexity. It includes the Touchet River and Mill Creek in Washington.

The Walla Walla River flows from headwaters in the mountains of Oregon through Washington, where it empties into the Columbia River near Wallula. Water availability for people, farms, and fish is a problem in the summer when demand is highest, accord-

WALLA WALLA WATER 2050 STRATEGIC PLAN

<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2112011.pdf>

ing to the Washington Department of Ecology.

Adjustments need to be made to the regulatory framework to address differences in state laws, Johnson said.

"What farmers are looking for are predictability and security in their water supply," she said.

"We have drought conditions in the Walla Walla every year; they're just not always caused by drought, they're caused by overallocation," said Chris Marks, water rights policy analyst for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla. "On the Oregon side we're over-allocated, on the Washington side we're over-allocated. We're over-allocated on surface water, alluvial groundwater and basalt groundwater. It's a very tenuous situation. The urgency is only growing."

Farmers relying on surface

water could find themselves drawing water from alternate sources, Marks said.

That could be from the Columbia River or surface water reservoirs, said Scott Tarbutton, leader of the project for Ecology's Office of the Columbia River.

The combined effort allows stakeholders to request federal, state and local funding, Tarbutton said. Costs vary depending on the strategy followed, he said, with estimates reaching up to \$500 million.

"These projects are expensive," he said. "We're all going to need to be speaking and cheering for the same things, and asking for funding that are focused on the same strategies."

Funding requests would likely begin in late 2022, Marks said.

The Washington Legislature allocated \$3 million for the 2021-23 biennium to help fund a groundwater study on the Washington side of the watershed, continue the flow study that's already begun and begin the move to Phase 2 of the plan, said Joye Redfield-Wilder, communications manager for Ecology.

Crop residue burning jumps in Idaho

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

Idaho producers burned nearly three times as many acres of crop residue in the first half of this year compared to the first six months of 2020.

"Last year, burn days were limited due to wildfire smoke," state Department of Environmental Quality Smoke Management Analyst Tami Aslett said. That postponed some burns from fall, 2020, when peak wildfire season intensified on high temperatures and high winds, to this year.

Crop rotations also factor into year-to-year changes in total acres burned, she said.

Aslett said agricultural producers burned just over 9,400 acres in the Jan. 1-June 30 period the department calls spring season. That's up from just below 3,500 acres a year earlier and is the highest spring total since 2012's nearly 15,000 acres, a record. The 2016-20 spring average is about 4,300 acres.



Idaho DEQ

A 2020 crop residue burn in Boundary County, Idaho.

For all of 2020, acres of crop residue burned in Idaho exceeded 48,000.

Aslett said fall season, July 1-Dec. 31, typically has higher volume. Burning usually picks up in late July after harvest of early crops such as small grains and grasses.

"A challenge is wildfire smoke at the same time, so air quality is monitored very closely," she said.

Most burning involves wheat and barley stubble, Kentucky Bluegrass and corn, Aslett said. Pasture grass is among other crop residue that is burned. Farmers removing ground from federal conservation programs

and putting it back into production also may choose to burn.

"Bluegrass in our area has to be burned, or it won't produce seeds the next year," Nezperce Prairie Grass Growers Association President Greg Branson said. That usually occurs in August or September.

"With the drought we are experiencing and all the wildfires we have going on right now, I foresee bluegrass residue burning to be put on hold until some of this clears out," he said. "And that will affect our bluegrass yields in a negative way. What we really need is some rain to put out the wildfires and also to help us for the crops next year."

Branson, who farms in the Nezperce-Craigmont area of north-central Idaho, said burning "is one of the most economical ways to prepare our fields for seeding in the fall, and it also helps to manage herbicide-resistant weeds."

Idaho DEQ manages the program largely to minimize or reduce smoke-emission impacts, Aslett said. Field staff monitor site weather conditions, and smoke emission and dispersal.

"Burning crop residue produces significant emissions if not managed properly," she said.

Fields within three miles of an institution with a sensitive population, such as a school, hospital or assisted-living center, are subject to specific permit conditions. Aslett said burning at those sites may be prohibited based on the direction and speed of sustained winds.

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