

People & Places

Making water work harder

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

BOISE — Mike Crist has spent some 30 years helping people understand innovative, technical products so they can put them to use. Water has been his focus in recent years. “People are paying more attention to water, finally,” said Crist, owner and CEO of AgriMaxx. “They are getting more serious about their water consumption, and conservation.”

The nearly four-year-old company sells a system that he says optimizes water at the molecular level.

“Every industry I’ve worked in, it’s trying to help people,” he said. “It’s not selling something they don’t need. It’s selling something everybody can benefit from.”

Crist learned of the approach while working in the wastewater treatment industry about seven years ago. The idea that treating water electronically could make it more efficient — “wetter,” in a sense — was both exciting and hard to believe.

“I heard all the things that can be done,” he said. “I knew why farmers would be skeptical. I was, too. I gave it a shot.”

The patent holder granted him the right to sell the technology. Crist started AgriMaxx in late 2017, early on helping a Portland-area farmer increase his corn yield.

“I had my ‘aha’ moment,” he said.

The unit, called Energy



Brad Carlson/Capital Press

AgriMaxx owner and CEO Mike Crist at a Boise golf course pond made clearer with help from one of the company’s systems.

System Plus, is an electronic device that works to “loosen” the ionic bond in water molecules as they pass through a controlled electrostatic field.

Crist guarantees a 20% increase in yield and a 20% decrease in fertilizer and water usage.

“By making a ‘wetter’ water, the result is that the plant can uptake the water much easier and therefore doesn’t need as much fertilizer,” he said. “The plant isn’t working as hard.”

Crist has been booking new customers in various industries, and working with established customers to install units in additional locations.

Farms, nurseries, golf courses and power and food processing plants are among the well-suited sites, he said.

The system also can be used on water that cattle consume, and even to optimize snowmaking and concrete curing.

Nurseries are the hottest market now, as operators seek to grow stronger, healthier plants and trees, Crist said.

Golf courses present a big opportunity as crews look to grow healthier grass with less water and fertilizer, he said.

And in ponds and lakes, blue-green algae control “will be huge,” he said.

The system is priced in the low-\$20,000s. He said it can pay for itself in most applications in six months, depending on how much is saved on other equipment or inputs, or how much yield increases. He forecasts 2022 sales of \$2.5 million compared to \$1 million combined during the past 3.5 years.

A southwest Idaho farmer who used one of the setups on a fairly small, flood-irrigated field told Capital Press he got an excellent sugar beet crop and used less water this year despite prolonged above-normal heat.

Crist said drought is one reason farmers and others



Western Innovator

MIKE CRIST
Age: 54
Title: Owner and CEO, AgriMaxx
Hometown: Portland. Lives in Meridian, Idaho.
Family: Adult daughter.
Hobbies: “All the beautiful stuff Idaho has to offer” including fishing, hunting, skiing, kayaking.
Education: Studied business at Arizona State University.
Career focus: Marketing, installing technically innovative systems.
Company specialty: Electronically optimizing water for irrigation and other purposes. Clients include farms, nurseries, golf courses, other industries and sites.
Company headquarters: Vancouver, Wash.
Employees: 4.
Website: <https://www.agri-maxx.com/>

are looking for ways to save water and get more benefit from the supply.

Getting the most out of each acre becomes critical, he said.

Salem teacher honored as Oregon AITC Educator of the Year

By GEORGE PLAIVEN
Capital Press

ALBANY, Ore. — Stephanie Madison, a fourth-grade teacher at Myers Elementary School in Salem, has been recognized as the 2021 Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Educator of the Year.

Madison was honored during the organization’s annual Fall Harvest Dinner and Auction Oct. 30 at the Linn County Expo Center in Albany, Ore.

Oregon AITC is a non-profit dedicated to promoting agriculture education in K-12 schools, and teaching students about farming, ranching and natural resources. The organization provides free resources for teachers to integrate agricultural themes into their lesson plans.

The Educator of the Year award acknowledges teachers such as Madison for finding creative ways to incorporate agriculture in their classrooms.

Madison’s passion for agriculture stems from her childhood raising ani-



Oregon AITC

Stephanie Madison, left, a fourth-grade teacher at Myers Elementary School in Salem, has been recognized as the 2021 Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Educator of the Year. Presenting the award to her is Jessica Jansen, executive director of Oregon Ag in the Classroom.

mals on her family’s hobby farm, and her participation in 4-H. She is an avid gardener — harvesting more

than 100 pounds of produce each year from her home — and continues to volunteer with 4-H as

a group leader and llama superintendent.

“Sharing my love of agriculture in the class-

room comes naturally,” Madison said.

Madison has received more than 30 grants to conduct agriculture-themed projects with her students, including experiments with seeds in which they tested germination rates. They also collected and compared data and sent students home with plants for their backyard and windowsill gardens.

Another highlight for Madison’s students involved borrowing an egg incubator from Oregon AITC’s lending library, and watching as baby chicks hatched from their shells.

Madison “provides unique learning opportunities to increase agricultural literacy among students in her classroom and the community,” said Jessica Jansen, Oregon AITC executive director.

“It is wonderful to have a teacher who inspires students through cross-disciplinary lessons with agriculture and natural resources education: literacy, math, science and sensory experiences,” Jansen said.

CALENDAR

Submit upcoming ag-related events on www.capitalpress.com or by email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

THROUGH SUNDAY NOV. 21
Tilth Conference (live and virtual): 7 a.m. Lynnwood Convention Center, 3711 196th St. SW, Lynnwood, Wash. This year’s conference is held in-person with virtual options available. Farmers, food system professionals, researchers and educators will learn from one another and share best practices, catch up with old friends and make new connections. Website: <https://bit.ly/3jkLAKy>

TUESDAY NOV. 23
NRCS Idaho Regional Conservation Partnership Webinar: 2-3 p.m. Mountain time. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service information for the new funding cycle. NRCS provides financial and technical assistance on partner-led projects that address on-farm, watershed and regional natural resource concerns. Website: <https://bit.ly/3q6qOIU>

TUESDAY-THURSDAY NOV. 30-DEC. 2
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting: Shoshone-Bannock Hotel and Event Center, 777 Bannock Trail, Fort Hall, Idaho. Members of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation will have their annual meeting. Website: <https://www.idahofb.org/events>

TUESDAY-FRIDAY NOV. 30-DEC. 3
Tri-State Grain Growers Convention 2021: Davenport Grand Hotel, 333 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., Spokane, Wash. Featured speakers include Sara Wyant, Agri-Pulse Communications Inc.; Eric Snodgrass, principle atmospheric scientist for Nutrien Ag Solutions; Idaho ag emcee Steve Miller; Futurity CEO Jack Bobo and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack (invited). Website: <https://www.wawg.org/convention/>

WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY DEC. 1-2
Organic Grower Summit: Hyatt Regency Monterey, 1 Old Golf Course Road, Monterey, Calif. The

event provides firsthand knowledge about a areas ranging from agriculture technology to food safety and sustainability. Website: <http://organicgrowerssummit.com>

WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY DEC. 1-3
California Cattleman’s Association Convention & Trade Show: Peppermill Resort Hotel, Reno, Nev. The convention will include industry speakers and educational events. Website: <http://www.calcattlemen.org>

SUNDAY-WEDNESDAY DEC. 5-8
2021 California Farm Bureau Annual Meeting: Hyatt Regency Orange County, 11999 Harbor Blvd., Garden Grove, Calif. Join us for an in-person, enhanced annual meeting experience including workshops on policy and advocacy, CE sessions on pesticide licensing, networking, annual awards, a trade show and the House of Delegates. The Young Farmers and Ranchers State Conference will be combined with the annual meeting and will be Dec. 4-5 in the same

venue. Website: <https://www.cfbf.com/annual-meeting/>

MONDAY DEC. 6
Washington Dairy Conference: Great Wolf Lodge, Centralia, Wash. The conference will include panels on the CAFO permit being developed by the Department of Ecology, state carbon legislation and technologies and the dairy industry’s Net Zero Initiative. Website: <http://www.wadairy.com>

TUESDAY DEC. 7
Virtual classes for pesticide applicators (online): 8 a.m.-noon. There will be virtual classes for pesticide applicators’ recertification, offered by Oregon OSHA and the Oregon Farm Bureau Health & Safety Committee. The virtual training will provide continuing education credits for any pesticide applicator licensed in Oregon. Participants will receive pesticide recertification CORE credits to maintain an applicator’s license. The four CORE credit hours provided are approved by the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture’s “Worker Protection

Standard: What You Should Know.” Website: <http://www.OregonFB.org/pesticideclass>

TUESDAY DEC. 7
NRCS Idaho State Technical Advisory Committee (virtual): Representatives of agricultural, natural resources and other groups advise NRCS and other USDA agencies on carrying out conservation provisions of federal Farm Bill. NRCS state conservationist chairs committee. Website: <https://bit.ly/30d0nJn>

TUESDAY-THURSDAY DEC. 7-9
2021 Oregon Farm Bureau Convention: Eagle Crest Resort, 1522 Cline Falls Road, Redmond, Ore. The Oregon Farm Bureau Federation’s annual convention, plus on Dec. 7 will be the Western Christmas Night Out, hosted by the Deschutes County Farm Bureau and Oregon’s Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee. Buses will shuttle Farm Bureau members to Smith Rock Ranch for the family-friendly food, drinks and fun. Website: <https://oregonfb.org/events-2/>



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