

Finding common ground in forest and fire management

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

A new joint study by the University of Washington and The Nature Conservancy, an environmental nonprofit, sought to find common ground between about 60 people with differing backgrounds and views on how forests should be managed to prevent wildfires.

The working group included scientists, practitioners and managers who specialize in forest and fire ecology, fire safety, air quality, health care and public health.

The research resulted in six key points of agreement that could help advance prescribed burning as part of forest management.

The researchers say they hope the study will influence future policies.

“These consensus statements aim to serve as guideposts for forest health and public health professionals to work together to promote healthy and resilient forests and communities,” said Ryan Haugo, co-author and director of conservation science for The Nature Conservancy in Oregon.

According to The Nature Conservancy, decades of fire suppression have increased forest fuels.

The nonprofit says that intentional fires — either prescribed fires that are deliberately set or unintended fires that are allowed to burn under control — can reduce the intensity of wildfires.

The challenge is that even prescribed fires can create smoke that is bad for public



A 2019 prescribed burn in the Deschutes National Forest in Central Oregon.

Mitch Maxson/The Nature Conservancy

health, making prescribed fire unpopular among some groups. Those in favor, however, say a moderate amount of smoke from controlled fire is better than a larger amount of smoke from a wildfire that’s out of control.

Lead author Savannah D’Evelyn, a postdoctoral fellow in the University of Washington’s Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, said study participants agreed that “all smoke is bad smoke from a public health perspective, but we can’t do fire management without more fire.”

The study, published in May in the journal *Current Environmental Health Reports*, listed the consensus statements that the study’s participants agreed upon:

- We recognize the need to listen to and integrate a diversity of perspectives, in particular those embodied by Indigenous peoples

who have successfully used fire as an ecological tool for thousands of years.

- Prescribed fires in addition to managed fires for resource benefit are both necessary management techniques to keep forests resilient and to lessen the negative ecological and public health impacts of wildfires.

- Certain regions of the Western U.S. will experience more smoke days with heightened use of prescribed and managed fire; however, we expect the impacts of smoke exposure to be reduced over the long term in comparison with untreated land burned by wildfires. With these techniques, exposure in affected communities can be planned and lessened.

- No degree of smoke exposure is without risk. However, additional investment in advance preparation for affected populations can lower associated health

risks. A smoke-resilient community is resilient to smoke from any type of fire.

- We must work to promote both equity in process (e.g., who has a say in decision-making) and equity in outcomes (e.g., who gets exposed to the smoke) within those communities and populations experiencing disproportionate impacts from smoke.

- We are missing opportunities for positive impact by working as separate disciplines. We recommend that further and intentional integration of forest/fire and health disciplines (including the practitioners, tools and resources) needs to occur to lessen the human health effects of smoke exposure due to prescribed and managed fires.

The study’s authors say they hope the research will build common ground for forest and fire management.

FDA warns against CBD products for food-producing farm animals

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has sent warning letters to four companies that the agency alleges were selling unapproved cannabidiol, or CBD, products for food-producing farm animals.

The letters warned that by manufacturing or marketing CBD-containing products for food animals the companies were violating the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act.

The agency cited a lack of data on how CBD affects animals, what residues may result when food-producing animals consume CBD products and what levels of potential residues are safe for a person consuming food that comes from a CBD-treated animal.

“After a food-producing animal is treated with a drug, residues of that drug may be present in the milk, eggs or meat if the animal is milked, eggs are collected or the animal is sent to slaughter before the drug is completely out of its system,” FDA said in a statement.

The letters were sent on May 26 to Hope Botanicals, Haniel Concepts dba Free State Oils, Plantacea LLC dba Kahm CBD and on May 4 to Kingdom Harvest.

FDA cited Hope Botanicals, based in Granbury, Texas, for several of its products, including “CBD Horse Pellets” (labeled as “Broad Spectrum CBD Pellets for Horses or Livestock”), “Peppermint Flavor Horse Formula,” “Happy Horse Bites” and “CBD Liniment Gel.”

Jenna Brown, president and manager of Hope Botanicals, said she learned about FDA’s warning letter

from a third party.

“I never received the warning letter by email nor mail,” said Brown. “Someone told me about it.”

Brown said FDA’s claim that she sells CBD products for food-producing animals is unfounded. Her products, she said, are intended for horses and companion animals.

Brown said she has agreed to work with FDA to relabel her products.

The three other companies did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

In FDA’s letter to Haniel Concepts dba Free State Oils, officials wrote that the company was selling unapproved new animal drugs including “Whisper’s Soothing Grains CBD for Farm Animals.”

In a letter to Kahm CBD, FDA wrote that the agency was “particularly concerned” about the company’s “CBD Hemp Pellets” products, bearing labels stating “for equine and livestock.”

“In addition to raising potential concerns regarding safety for the animals themselves, CBD products for food-producing animals raise concerns regarding the safety of the human food (meat, milk and eggs) derived from those animals,” FDA officials Neal Bataller, Donald Ashley and Ann Oxenham wrote in the letter.

The fourth company, Kingdom Harvest, was cited for several alleged violations, including for promoting a product called “Ranch & Livestock Natural Whole-Spectrum Hemp Extract.”

FDA gave the four companies a 15-day grace period to respond and take corrective actions before the agency takes potential legal or regulatory action.

IPEF a start for Indo-Pacific exports

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Most agricultural groups recognize the Indo-Pacific region is an important destination for U.S. exports and welcomed the Biden administration’s launch of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity, or IPEF.

But they also recognize there’s a lot of work to be done to expand markets for U.S. goods.

The IPEF includes 13 countries — the U.S., Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

While it’s new and much needs to be negotiated, it reasserts U.S. leadership in the region, said Max Baucus, former Democratic senator from Montana and former U.S. Ambassador to China.

There is no more important region to America’s economic future, national security and global future than the Indo-Pacific, he said during a virtual press conference organized by Farmers for Free Trade.

“America has to lead. If we don’t lead, there’s a huge vacuum. It’s critically



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

The Port of Portland’s Terminal 6. U.S. farm groups recognize the importance of the Indo-Pacific region for ag trade.

important that we lead,” he said.

Obviously, the U.S. has to lean into the agreement much more as it doesn’t provide opportunities to reduce tariffs or efficiently expand market access, he said.

“But it’s critical at least we start, at least we begin because our economic future very much depends on moving ahead with IPEF. It may be weak, but it’s a beginning. We have to work with it,” he said.

It’s also important for establishing a counterweight

to China. That was the whole point of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, he said.

He worked hard trying to get TPP passed before the 2016 presidential election, but it was clear it wasn’t going anywhere, he said.

President Trump withdrew the U.S. from the agreement in January 2017.

“Anyway, it’s not passed. We paid the price, and now it’s important for us to get going again,” he said.

Japan took over when the U.S. pulled out of TPP,

and the region moved ahead with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP. Now China and Taiwan want to join, he said.

“It’s unfortunate the Biden administration does not want to join ... it’s not good, but it’s what it is,” he said.

“Well it is what it is. We’re not going to get TPP passed ... that’s clear. So this is sort of next step, it’s a start,” he said.

He likened proposal to Social Security and Medicare, which were both bare bones when first enacted. But over time, Congress built upon them providing better benefits and making them stronger, he said.

“I think that’s a pretty good model for IPEF. That is, ‘Let’s build upon it ... let’s keep working with it,’” he said.

He urges everyone to work hard and work together, and said there’s no question that’s going to happen because a lot of people realize the importance of the Indo-Pacific region to America.

Snake River flow boost for fish less than last year’s

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

The Bureau of Reclamation is boosting the Snake River’s flow to help migrating fish, but not as much as last year.

The Snake River’s annual flow increase to help salmon and steelhead as they migrate downstream is expected to be 18-30% less than last year’s.

But this year’s volume is higher than originally anticipated because of heavy spring rain, said Brian Stevens, supervisory civil engineer at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Upper Snake Field Office in Heyburn.

Stevens said increased flow for fish, known as flow augmentation, will be 300,000 to 350,000 acre-feet, down from last year’s 427,000.

“We deliver what is available,” he said. “It reflects low storage and low anticipated runoff.”

However, this year’s total is above initial projections, which ranged from 220,000 to 280,000 acre-feet, Stevens said.

The flow augmentation could increase even more depending on water availability.

Ag groups support investment to strengthen the food system

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Agricultural groups are responding favorably to USDA’s nearly \$3 billion investment aimed at transforming the U.S. food system to make it more resilient and competitive.

USDA’s efforts will address the entire food supply chain, from production and processing to distribution and markets, said USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack in a June 1 press conference.

Chuck Connor, president and CEO of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, introduced Vilsack at the conference, saying farmers co-ops and their

members have persevered through a flood of evolving challenges over the past two years to make sure the food system held.

“But one lesson that my members learned is that we cannot take the strength of the supply chain for granted. Change is needed to strengthen it in the face of whatever future challenges we see as a nation,” he said.

“That is why today’s announcement on USDA’s efforts to ensure resiliency, competitiveness and equity is so important to the future of American agriculture,” he said.

National Farmers Union said it has been working to bring many of the issues

USDA is targeting into the national spotlight, including broadening market opportunities, expanding processing capabilities and addressing supply chain vulnerabilities.

“Farmers Union members have long known the importance of a strong and resilient food supply and a fair agricultural economy,” said Rob Larew, NFU president.

“Today’s announcement by Secretary Vilsack about how the USDA will work to transform the food system is a great step towards those ends,” he said.

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition commended USDA for committing new funding to

strengthen critical parts of the food system, promote greater competition and fairness, build resiliency and generate greater economic opportunity for small and medium scale producers.

“For far too long we have seen how inadequate competition stifles growth and innovation throughout the agricultural supply chain and makes the food system susceptible to significant shocks such as pandemics and war,” said Eric Deeble, the coalition’s policy director.

American Farmland Trust is particularly pleased with USDA’s investment to establish a network of food business centers to sup-

port local and regional food systems.

“We are pleased that USDA has heeded the call from 50 members of Congress and more than 110 organizations to recognize the important role that customized business technical assistance can play in the viability of small and mid-size farm and food businesses,” said John Piotti, the trust’s president and CEO.

Organic farming organizations are applauding USDA’s investment to support producers’ transition to organic production.

“This historic investment in food production, which increases options for Amer-

ican farmers to adopt practices that are both good for their businesses and the climate, is a significant win for our industry,” said Tom Chapman, executive director of the Organic Trade Association.

Organic Farming Research Foundation said it has advocated all the provisions in the organic transition initiative.

“It is extremely encouraging to hear Secretary Vilsack recognize organic systems of production will be a vital piece in our collective effort addressing the climate crisis,” said Gordon Merrick, the foundation’s policy and programs manager.