

Groundbreaking ceremony held for nation's largest research dairy

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

RUPERT, Idaho — Ground has finally been broken for the much-anticipated research dairy — the largest in the U.S. — that can take Idaho's dairy producers sustainably into the future.

"This really is an historic event," said Mark McGuire, University of Idaho associate dean and director of the Idaho Agriculture Experiment Station.

The university knew there was a need for a research dairy in southern Idaho. Dairywomen and Idaho Dairywomen's Association led the effort, and the university responded, he said.

Dairy is a progressive force that wants answers and solutions. The research dairy has been a long time coming, and the university's partnership with dairy producers led to success, he said.

"It's nice to be moving dirt," he said.

The research dairy will be the main component of the university's \$45 million Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment,



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Breaking ground for the nation's largest research dairy are, from left, Chandra Zenner Ford, University of Idaho executive officer; Pete Wiersma, president of Idaho Dairywomen's Association; Maxine Bell, former state representative; Rick Naerebout, Idaho Dairywomen's Association CEO; and Micheal Parrella, dean of the University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. The groundbreaking took place June 30 north of Rupert, Idaho.

said Michael Parrella, dean of the university's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

"Today is certainly a significant milestone for the research dairy," he said.

Dairy research by universities

around the country is making great progress. But that research is on a small scale, about 100 cows, he said.

"They are not going to be able to do the work that we'll be able to do here," he said.

The commercial-scale dairy will be built on a 640-acre demonstration farm conducting environmental research and will have a capacity of up to 2,000 cows. Its research will have a unique focus on the arid West, where herd sizes are especially large and operations face unique challenges such as water constraints.

"We expect this facility to be a mecca," bringing in other researchers, students and research funding, he said.

Research will address environmental impacts of dairies on water quality and efficiency, as well as nutrient management and soil health. It will be an intersection of animal agriculture and crop agriculture, he said.

Dairy producers came to the university to drive the impetus and need for the facility, he said.

"I don't look at this as a U of I project; I look at this as a partnership," he said.

Rick Naerebout, CEO of Idaho Dairywomen's Association, said the foundation of a research dairy unique to Idaho was laid by dairy producers Mike Quesnell and Bill

Stouder (now deceased), who saw the need for environmental research.

"This is a huge moment for us," he said.

The U.S. dairy industry has committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The research dairy is going to be a key figure in helping the industry reach that goal, he said.

"After two decades of talking about this project ... we're going to move dirt," he said.

The research dairy is expected to be completed in 2023 and to begin milking cows in 2024.

The dairy is a partnership between the university, Idaho Dairywomen's Association—which has led the effort for more than 15 years—and the state, with each contributing funding.

Other agriculture groups, processors and individuals have contributed or committed funding for the larger Center for Agriculture, Food and Environment. CAFE includes an education and outreach center in Jerome and food science efforts in partnership with the College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls.

Study: Dam plan puts region behind 'decarbonizing' goal

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The Pacific Northwest is already behind in reaching political leaders' goal of "decarbonizing" the electric grid, and replacing the lower Snake River dams would only add more cost, create delays and generate more carbon dioxide, according to a recent study from Northwest RiverPartners.

"For farmers, this is a huge issue," said Kurt Miller, executive director of the not-for-profit organization, which represents regional community-owned utilities. "Tens of thousands of acres of irrigated farmland will be lost if the dams are breached. Additionally, electricity is a major expense for farmers, especially for those who use pumps for irrigation. Electricity rates could jump by 25% or more if the dams are lost."

Environmental groups and



Kurt Miller



Associated Press File

Ice Harbor Dam, one of four dams on the lower Snake River.

a handful of politicians want to breach the lower Snake River dams, but the electricity they generate would need to be replaced.

"Decarbonizing" the power grid refers to eliminating the use of coal, oil and natural gas to generate electricity. Dams are a carbon dioxide-free resource, Miller said.

The study found it would cost \$142 billion to meet current Ore-

gon and Washington laws that aim to achieve decarbonization by 2040 and 2045, respectively.

Removing the dams would add at least \$15 billion to the total cost.

The study, conducted by Energy GPS Consulting, considered the historic paces of developing renewable resources for the Western Power Pool, California and Texas, and doubled them.

The study finds the capacity required to achieve base case requirements while maintaining the dams, would not be achieved until 2057 in a best-case scenario, and 2076 in a worst-case scenario.

"It's showing how far behind the region is in achieving its decarbonization requirements under those laws," Miller said. "It is genuinely shocking once you see what it takes to get there."

Miller thinks the extra \$15 billion cost of removing the dams, "even in today's age, is still a lot of money." He notes that's just the cost of the power supply, at current values, so it's likely to increase.

"Right now, it's public power customers who would be stuck with the bill if they were removed," he said. "For them, the rate impact would be tremendous."

Northwest RiverPartners presented the study's findings to consultants working on Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and Sen. Patty Murray's federal-state assessment on dam breaching. Murray and Inslee are slated to make their final recommendation this summer.

"As the governor and senator noted when the draft consultant report was released, they take public feedback very seriously," said Jaime Smith, spokesperson for Inslee's office. "The governor will be considering that feedback when he makes his recommendations."

Stakeholders need to understand the importance of hydropower to clean energy, and find ways to get more production from them if possible, Miller said.

Miller called the study a "wake-up call" and "major warning" to people concerned about carbon reduction.

"It shows we really can't get there, especially without the lower Snake River dams remaining in place," he said.

According to the study:

- Existing state laws to decarbonize the electric system require 160,000 megawatts of new generation and batteries.

- An additional 14,900 megawatts of new generation and batteries will be required to make up for the loss of the lower Snake River dams in a zero-carbon future.

West Coast ports remain open after contract expiration

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

Ports on the West Coast continue to operate even though a contract between container terminal owners and a union representing dockworkers expired on July 1.

Negotiations began May 10 over the contract that governs wages, benefits and employment rules for the longshoremen who work at Pacific Maritime Association terminals. The contract expired at 5 p.m. Pacific Time last Friday, but there was no strike or lockout, good news for shippers who say a slowdown could have impeded port operations and hobbled supply chains.

When the previous contract ended in mid-2014, it caused work slowdowns that cost businesses, including agricultural exporters, hundreds of millions of dollars. Shippers say they are relieved that didn't happen this year.

In a joint statement July 1, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the Pacific Maritime Association said talks over a new contract are ongoing.

"Negotiations for a new labor contract covering more than 22,000 dockworkers at 29 West Coast ports will continue to move forward," the statement said. "...While there will be no contract extension, cargo will keep moving and normal operations will continue at the ports until an agreement can be reached."

The statement said both sides "understand the strategic importance of the ports to the local, regional and U.S. economies."

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