

Voucher program expanded to include e-tractors in California

By **GEORGE PLAGEN**
Capital Press

PASADENA, Calif. — California farmers thinking about buying an electric tractor may be enticed with an extra financial incentive under the state's newly expanded Clean Off-Road Equipment Voucher Incentive Program, or CORE.

Begun in 2020 by the California Air Resources Board, CORE is part of a larger overall strategy to achieve 100% zero-carbon emissions from passenger cars, trucks and off-road vehicles by 2035 as mandated by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

The program is one of many funded by billions of dollars collected from California's cap-and-trade scheme, which charges certain companies for "allowances" on emitting greenhouse gases and reinvesting the proceeds in projects to combat climate change.

CORE is administered by CALSTART, a national nonprofit headquartered in Pasadena, Calif., that works to accelerate the adoption of clean transportation technology.

Jacob Whitson, lead program manager, said vouchers were initially limited to off-road vehicles tied to freight — equipment such as forklifts, refrigeration trucks and ground support equipment used at airports, to name a few examples.

For fiscal year 2021-22, Whitson said CORE received \$125 million in additional funding, more than double the amount originally allotted. That has allowed the program to add nine new categories for vouchers, including one for agricultural equipment.

Whitson said Monarch Tractor and Solelectrac, makers of battery-powered electric tractors, are both approved for vouchers through CORE.

"Here in California, obviously, we have a strong focus on these climate goals," he said. "There is the regulatory structure to help this transition. But we're also starting to see what we refer to as the 'tech readiness' level of the equipment, getting to that point where it's able to do the work of its diesel equivalent."

In neighboring Oregon, several nonprofit groups and researchers are working with farmers to field test these types of e-tractors, seeing what they can do, while comparing the cost of ownership



George Plaven/Capital Press

Robert Wallace, executive director of the Wy'East Resource Conservation and Development Area Council, demonstrates a new Solelectrac compact electric tractor at his home in Dufur, Ore.



Jacob Whitson, lead program manager for the state of California's Clean Off-Road Equipment Voucher Incentive Program, administered by CALSTART.

to their diesel counterparts.

Robert Wallace, executive director of the Wy'East Resource Conservation and Development Area Council based in The Dalles, Ore., said he believes the technology holds promise, particularly for small farms and vineyards, though he acknowledges it isn't yet suited for every operation.

Meanwhile, Oregon State University published a study May 12 comparing cost of ownership for the Solelectrac

Compact Electric Tractor, versus the 32-horsepower John Deere 2032R.

Assuming both tractors operated 250 hours per year for seven years, the study found the cost of ownership was roughly the same, ranging from \$39,853 to \$40,738 for the electric model compared to \$37,553 to \$43,072 for the diesel model.

More than 80% of the cost of ownership for the Solelectrac was associated with the initial purchase price. That is what programs like CORE are seeking to overcome, Whitson said.

"It seems to be a beneficial avenue for the consumer to help with the barrier of cost into these segments," he said.

As of Aug. 4, CALSTART had already received more than \$170 million in requests for vouchers through CORE. Each category is capped at \$25 million, and though some categories are oversubscribed, Whitson said there is still about \$15 million available for agriculture equipment.

After Sept. 18, if there is still funding available, Whitson said they will lift all caps and allocate the remaining money based on demand.

"Agriculture has always stepped up to the plate to be a good steward of the land and environment," Whitson said. "This is just an area where the agriculture sector will step up and make that transition."

Oregon lifts animal import requirements as wildfires burn

By **GEORGE PLAGEN**
Capital Press

SALEM — Oregon agriculture officials are lifting import requirements for livestock and companion animals as multiple large wildfires have forced residents in neighboring states to flee.

As of Aug. 4, the McKinney Fire in northern California near the Oregon border had burned more than 90 square miles and all but wiped out the 200-person town of Klamath River. Four people have been found dead inside the burn zone.

West of the McKinney Fire, the Yeti and Alex fires have also burned 4,626 acres in Siskiyou County, prompting additional evacuations.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture will provide an emergency exemption for any livestock entering the state, so long as they are coming from an area under level 1, 2 or 3 wildfire evacuation orders. Exemptions will remain in place through Sept. 30.

To qualify, farmers and ranchers must notify the Oregon state veterinarian by phone or email within 72 hours after entry with the following information:

- Complete physical address of origin where animals are being evacuated from.
- Name and phone number of owner of animals.
- Complete physical address of location in Oregon where animals are being evacuated to.
- Name and phone number of contact for animals while in Oregon.
- Number and species of animals evacuated to Oregon.

The Oregon state veter-

inarian can be reached at 503-986-4680 or ahforms@oda.oregon.gov.

Animals evacuated to Oregon must return to their state of origin within 30 days. If that is not possible, the Oregon state veterinarian must be notified by phone prior to the 30th day.

Hot, dry and windy weather has accelerated the spread of wildfires across the Northwest. In central Washington, the Vantage Highway Fire has ballooned to 26,490 acres with 21% containment east of Ellensburg.

The Cow Canyon Fire, 1 mile northeast of Wenas, Wash., is 1,500 acres and threatening about 50 homes, according to Yakima County Emergency Management.

Large fires in Idaho include the Payette Wilderness, Wolf Fang and Woodtick blazes, burning a combined 5,900 acres of rugged, mountainous terrain. The Woodtick Fire has triggered immediate evacuations for residents at Camas Creek in Lemhi County.

Oregon is also seeing an uptick of wildfire activity, with Gov. Kate Brown invoking the Emergency Conflagration Act to battle the 10,500-acre Miller Road Fire in Wasco County. Evacuation orders are in effect, and one home has been destroyed.

Other fires in Oregon include the 1,093-acre Windigo Fire and 125-acre Potter Fire, both burning in the Umpqua National Forest, and the 248-acre Beech Fire in Grant County.

The National Interagency Fire Center in Boise has set its fire preparedness level at 3 out of 5, meaning wildfire activity is now ongoing through about a quarter of the country.

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