

New Christmas tree checkoff fees fund promotion

Growers will self-report assessment of 15 cents per tree

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

As the Christmas tree harvest gets underway, leaders of a new promotional program are preparing to collect check-off fees from farmers for the first time.

While slumping participation doomed voluntary programs in the past, board members of the nationwide Christmas Tree Promotion Board expect most growers will comply with the mandatory assessment of 15 cents per tree.

"It's backed up by the USDA, so I think most people will take it seriously," said Mark Arkills, a board member and production manager for Holiday Tree Farms, a major tree grower based in Corvallis.

The program's staff has been compiling a database of contact information for eligible

tree growers around the U.S. and will soon send instructions for paying the checkoff fee, said Tim O'Connor, the board's executive director.

"We've been scouring the industry to get every name we can get," he said.

Investment in the industry

Most farmers will hopefully view the payments — which will be due by mid-February — as an investment in the industry, which is competing with artificial trees from China, board members said.

"It just seems absolutely necessary for the long-term lifetime of our industry," said Betty Malone, a board member and owner of Sunrise Tree Farm near Philomath.

The board will conduct random and targeted audits to ensure growers are properly paying their fees, since the program has the authority to subpoena and review business records, O'Connor said.

"We have a lot to learn yet because we've never gone through our collection process," he said.

Farmers who don't pay their fees are subject to civ-



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Workers load Christmas trees onto a truck in this Capital Press file photo. Farmers will be assessed 15 cents per tree after the 2015 harvest to fund a national checkoff program aimed at promoting the crop, which competes with fake trees from China.

il penalties, though the exact amounts have yet to be determined, he said.

The goal is to ensure everyone in the industry is paying their fair share, which is what distinguishes the mandatory program from past efforts,

O'Connor said. "Free riders always bring down a voluntary program."

The board expects to raise about \$2 million a year for research and promotion, but it's currently operating on a line of credit and prepayments

of checkoff fees from some growers, said Jim Heater, a board member and owner of Silver Mountain Christmas Trees in Sublimity.

"We have to watch our pennies, because we're not going to be a real big checkoff," he said.

Once the checkoff funds begin coming in, the board will begin reviewing proposals from advertising agencies for the most effective ways of promoting the crop, said Arkills.

Real trees, family experience

Consumer focus groups of millennials and artificial tree buyers show that the main challenge for real Christmas trees is they're perceived to be more difficult to acquire, take home and set up, O'Connor said.

However, real trees have an advantage in the family experience that's associated with picking and cutting them, he said.

To compare, taking an artificial tree out of the attic or basement isn't much of a family event, he said. "It gives us something the artificial tree can never do."

While this year has focused on building the structure of the checkoff program, in 2016 experts will use such information to craft a message that will motivate consumers, said Malone. "It's an activity that really does bring people together."

Josephson's Smokehouse joins seafood recall

Salmon, sturgeon and tuna affected

The Daily Astorian

Josephson's Smokehouse of Astoria is voluntarily recalling nine canned seafood products — salmon, sturgeon and tuna — it received from Skipanon Brand Seafood of Warrenton because the food may cause botulism, a form of food-poisoning that can cause life-threatening illness or death, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced.

The decision continues the ongoing recall of canned Skipanon Brand Seafood prod-

ucts that began earlier this month when Mark Kujala, owner of Skipanon and mayor of Warrenton, initiated a voluntary recall of all Skipanon products, after a routine FDA inspection noted a lack of documentation and possibly underprocessed products.

Bornstein Seafoods of Astoria and Ecola Seafoods of Cannon Beach recently recalled Skipanon's products, as well.

The recalled products had been distributed to wholesalers and retailers in Oregon, Washington state, Nevada and Michigan and sold over the Internet to customers nationwide, Skipanon said.

Kujala said the Skipanon recall is a precautionary mea-

sure. No cases of illness associated with Skipanon's products have been reported. The FDA warned consumers not to use the product even if it does not look or smell spoiled.

Josephson's is recalling products sold to consumers from the business's retail store in Astoria and to mail-order customers through www.josephsons.com and telephone orders, the FDA said. Mail-order sales went to individual customers and were not for resale.

The business has identified all recipients of the recalled products through in-house in-voicing and Yahoo shopping webstore invoicing system. These recipients are being contacted by email, tele-

phone and mail with the recall information, which is published on Josephson's website and displayed on placards in the retail store.

Josephson's will replace returned cans with products that have been produced at a different processor location. The recalled cans for replacement can be brought to the retail store or mailed to Josephson's Smokehouse; 106 Marine Dr., Astoria, Oregon, 97103.

Customers who have purchased recalled canned seafood products are urged to destroy them or return them to the firm for a replacement.

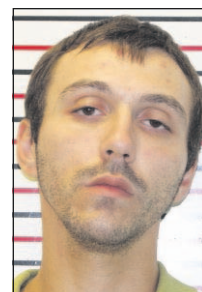
For questions, call Josephson's Smokehouse at 503-325-2190 between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Astoria man arrested in heroin overdose case

The Daily Astorian

sponded to the scene. The exact cause of Norris' death is pending toxicology results from the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office.

A 26-year-old Astoria man was arrested Saturday for delivery of heroin in connection to an overdose death of a 24-year-old Warrenton man.



Sean Hill

Sean Hill was identified as the person who allegedly provided heroin to Matthew Norris, who was found unresponsive Friday at a residence on the 4600 block of Cedar Street in Astoria.

Astoria Police and Fire Departments and Medix Ambulance responded and upon arrival found Norris dead from an apparent heroin overdose.

The Clatsop County Medical Examiner also re-

sponded to the scene. The exact cause of Norris' death is pending toxicology results from the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office.

Also found at the scene was 26-year-old Caitlynn Walters, who was arrested for an unrelated felony arrest warrant.

Upon his arrest, Hill was also found to be in possession of methamphetamine and was charged with possession of methamphetamine.

Anyone with additional information regarding the case is asked to contact Detective Nicole Riley of the Astoria Police Department at 503-298-2533 or by email at nriley@astoria.or.us.

Lewis and Clark Elementary on brief lockdown

The Daily Astorian

Lewis and Clark Elementary School in Astoria was in lockdown Tuesday morning after a report of a man walking toward the school with a rifle.

The man, of the Lewis and Clark area, was

contacted by the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office on a logging road that runs behind the school.

The man was walking on an early morning deer hunt. The man and his firearms were run through law enforcement databases and everything was in order, according to the sheriff's office.

The sheriff's office advised the hunter of the current climate of concerns related to weapons near schools.

Astoria Police and Oregon State Police responded to assist on the call. Lewis and Clark Elementary was in lockdown for a short period until the incident was investigated.

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