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President's Message

John Zielinski
MCFB President

On our farm, as is true with most farms, the pace is a bit easier now than the hectic rush of the harvest months are past. Don't get me wrong, we like many of you are still plenty busy; at our Farm Market we cleaned up everything from the harvest festival and jumped right into gift boxes, Christmas trees, and wreaths. In our orchards they are pruning in anticipation of next year's crop.

With it being not quite as hectic I was reflecting about this year; I was thinking about the many farmers that I have had the opportunity to interact with. Some of the farmers were neighbors, some were Farm Bureau friends, some were people that I met at various meetings. I came to summation that networking is critical to the success of Oregon agriculture.

Some people are farmers because they don't want to be in an office and the thought of meetings of any type makes them cringe; but it is through the network of your neighbors and fellow farmers that the Oregon Agricultural community has and will continue to combat the significant issues that keep coming up in the legislature.

I understand that not everyone is comfortable testifying at the legislature, but maybe you know someone who is. When I was young, my father preferred to be on the farm; but my mother (who grew up in town) became active in Women for Agriculture and was a positive voice for agriculture. Farmers are just 1 percent of the population—that puts us in a tough position when groups trying to pass legislation that is not friendly to ag can summon large numbers of people to their cause.

If you are one of those folks who would prefer, like my father, to be out on the farm rather than in a meeting, I challenge you to push your limits and get involved. And if you truly are uncomfortable, then look around your family and farm operation—maybe your wife, son, or daughter would be an excellent speaker. Chances are that they are passionate about agriculture, and they might rise to the challenge of advocating for agriculture.

In the upcoming 2016 "short" legislative session this February there will be numerous issues such as minimum wage and flexible scheduling that could change agriculture in Oregon as we know it. To defeat these bills the support of the whole agricultural community is needed. Talk to your neighboring farmers, talk to your urban and suburban friends. Post your thoughts on social media. At a meeting I attended this past year I heard the speaker say that farmers in general as a group rate high with the general public. Use that feeling of trust and good will and share your story with our urban neighbors and the elected officials.

Get out there and network, it is vital to your farm's future.

2015 Year in Review

Developed by MCFB Staff

The Marion County Farm Bureau saw a very active year in 2015 and maintained the high visibility we have so carefully cultivated over the past several years. MCFB was at the forefront of several important issues.

Government Relations

The 2015 legislative session proved to be devastating to the business community. The legislature focused on a number of labor issues including paid sick leave, flexible work schedules, and minimum wage, to name a few. MCFB members provided thoughtful and reasonable testimony on behalf of the farming community. The make-up of the 2015 legislature was not conducive to a healthy business climate and many of the proposals passed. However, MCFB's voice was heard and helped to stop several of the more onerous proposals such as flexible work schedules and minimum wage.

2015 Issues

Willamette River Erosion—Marion County Farm Bureau is researching the erosion of property along the Willamette River for the purpose of documenting the loss of farmland for the possible introduction of legislation to fund a study that would be needed to allow dredging of the river to offset loss of land. To that end, MCFB sent letters to all county Farm Bureaus bordering the Willamette requesting assistance in gathering information and data concerning how many farmers are affected, along with the economic impact of erosion. MCFB led the discussion on this topic during the Oregon Farm Bureau Federation's 2015 Annual Meeting in Sunriver.

25 Fields—MCFB continues to monitor the activities of the proponents of 25 Fields. Although Board members expressed concern over the proposed location of the project (195 acres of property on the east side of Interstate 5 at Keizer Station, Exit 260 currently zoned EFU), proponents painted MCFB as supportive of the effort. MCFB took exception to this assertion in the press and public forums and restated its position to reflect opposition to the proposed site.

Drought Declaration—Marion County Farm Bureau continues to have a strong presence before the Marion County Commissioners and, in the face of severe drought conditions, was asked to weigh in on whether the Governor should declare Marion County in a state of drought. The Board met with Ed Flick, Marion County Emergency Manager, and requested input from MCFB members before making its recommendation to the Commissioners.

MCFB initially was hesitant for Marion County to declare if there were no real benefits to be derived. While MCFB did not oppose declaration, MCFB did not wish to create a situation where some members of the community might be adversely affected by additional regulation, effectively creating winners and losers as a result of prioritization of usage.

MCFB took into consideration that blueberry crops, particularly new unestablished fields, were being adversely affected by drought conditions. Declaration by the Governor would afford farmers the option to use domestic water supplies to irrigate those crops. MCFB sent a letter stating its position and the Declaration was ultimately made following an emergency meeting by the Commissioners in early September.

Fall Festival Fire & Safety Codes—MCFB President John Zielinski and staff continue to work with the Office of State Fire Marshal to craft realistic fire code regulations for fall festival events that include the use of corn mazes, tents, and hay bales. A draft of the proposed code changes will be circulated to interested parties before the end of the year to solicit feedback. The Oregon Fire Codes Council will review the draft at its January meeting.

North Santiam Watershed Council Boundary Expansion—MCFB was asked by Marion County Commissioners to study and provide an opinion on the expansion of the North Santiam Watershed Council. The Board met with Brent Stevenson and Rebecca McCoun of the North Santiam Watershed Council to discuss expansion of the Council's boundaries. Following the meeting and discussion, the Board voted to support the boundary expansion. In making its decision, the Board considered the fact that the Mill Creek Watershed Council is inactive, leaving the area unrepresented. In light of the fact

Food Share Youth Farm Moves to Chemeketa Campus

Excerpted from www.marionpolkfoodshare.org, 11/30/2015

In three years, the Marion-Polk Food Share Youth Farm has grown 23,000 pounds of food as well as helped 30 youth grow into future leaders. Now, a partnership with Chemeketa Community College means that the farm itself will grow. The Youth Farm will more than double in size by moving to a new site on the Chemeketa Salem campus.



The new Youth Farm site will have up to six acres of irrigated land that will be planted with vegetable beds and orchards for food production. There will be a greenhouse and an outdoor classroom for gardening classes and workshops.

“Having the Youth Farm at Chemeketa is more than just a bigger farm; we have the opportunity to create a garden education site for the entire community,” said Ian Dixon-McDonald, Vice President of Programs at the Food Share. “The Youth Farm will serve more youth, raise more food, and engage more community volunteers and mentors.”

The new farm will integrate into Chemeketa’s agricultural sciences curriculum and give students an opportunity to see a working farm in action.

Construction on the new farm will take place over the winter. Full production is anticipated by spring, when a new class of Youth Farmers will begin work. Half of the produce from the Youth Farm will be distributed through the Food Share network to families in need in our community. The rest of the produce will be for sale to the public in summer 2016 in CSA shares and at the Salem Saturday Market.

For more information about the Youth Farm, call Marion-Polk Food Share at 503-581-3855 or visit the MPFS website at www.marionpolkfoodshare.org.

Wild Bee Declines Threaten US Crop Pollination

Excerpted from the Integrated Crop Pollination Project, www.icpbees.org

And the Vegetable Growers News, www.vegetablegrowersnews.com

A new national assessment of the status and trends of U.S. wild bees estimates that wild bees declined in 23 percent of the contiguous U.S. between 2008 and 2013. The team of Project ICP researchers, led by Insu Koh at the University of Vermont, found that the decline was generally associated with conversion of natural habitats to row crops.

The new study identifies 139 counties in key agricultural regions of California, the Pacific Northwest, the upper Midwest and Great Plains, west Texas, and the southern Mississippi River valley that have the most worrisome mismatch between falling wild bee supply and rising crop pollination demand. These counties tend to be places that grow specialty crops – such as almonds, blueberries, and apples – that are highly dependent on pollinators. Or they are counties that grow less dependent crops – such as soybeans, canola and cotton – in large quantities.

As the acreage of pollinator-dependent crops expands, the concurrent loss of natural habitat leads to lower abundance of the wild bees needed to pollinate these crops. To maintain stability in pollinators, crop pollination, and yields of these crops, the authors suggest that farmers may need to maintain or enhance habitats for wild bees on and around their farms or invest more heavily in managed pollinators.

For more information, visit the Integrated Crop Pollination Project’s website at www.icpbees.org





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Important Dates

January 10-13—AFBF Convention
Orlando, Florida

January 13—MCFB Board Meeting
Salem Office, 1284 Court Street

January 22—SAIF Agri-Business Banquet
Salem Convention Center
503-581-1466 x313 for reservations

February 10—MCFB Board Meeting
Salem Office, 1284 Court Street

March 9—MCFB Board Meeting
Salem Office, 1284 Court Street

MCFB Year in Review

(Continued from page 2)

that some other entity will fill that void, the MCFB Board feels it is important that responsibilities be absorbed by an entity that is already keenly familiar with the area and, in fact, regularly diverts water from the Santiam River in order to sustain Mill Creek. It was also noted that if another entity assumed responsibility for Mill Creek, it would effectively split the North Santiam Watershed Council into two separate areas.

Ag Tour—On March 31, approximately 50 MCFB members and several elected officials set out on the 2nd Annual MCFB AG Tour and toured several local farms to witness cultivation and various types of Marion County Agriculture including hazelnuts, wild rice, various seeds, a dairy, hazelnut processing, a brewery, a winery, a meat processing plant and a mink farm. Stops were located in the Willamette Valley, including Gervais, Mt. Angel, Hubbard, and Silverton. The group endured some typical Oregon weather but all had a great time and ended the evening with some local refreshments at the Mt. Angel Sausage Company. MCFB has received overwhelming requests to continue this and will begin the planning of the 2016 MCFB Ag tour shortly. The event was very effective in demonstrating to elected officials the farming process from field to transport. It also helped to build comradery between members of the farming community and was an excellent member outreach.

Don't Miss Your Newsletter!

In an effort to be careful stewards of our resources, MCFB plans to switch to e-newsletters to save money on printing and postage. Members are encouraged to forward your email address to jessica@marioncofarm.com.