STATE OF IDAHO
DIRK KEMPTHORNE/GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PATRICK A. TAKASUGI/DIRECTOR

This Week In Agriculture

September 4-10, 2005

Farm Bill forum comes to Idaho

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will hold a Farm Bill listening session to get Idaho opinions on the 2007 Farm Bill. The meeting will be at 1 p.m. Sept. 6 in Blackfoot during the Eastern Idaho State Fair. The public is welcome to attend and speak.

Agriculture has a bright future

By Pat Takasugi
Director, Idaho State Department of Agriculture

Idahoans have a rich history of confronting change head on. We're the ones in control, pulling the levers and dictating our future.

This has always been the story of agriculture in Idaho.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the pioneers who settled some of the rugged sagebrush country of this state knew in their hearts they

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Sage grouse projects produce clear results

The members of the Owyhee County Sage Grouse Local Working Group, shown here inspecting their work on the Crab Creek Meadow habitat restoration project. Left to right: Dick Reynolds, Ken Miracle, Herb Meyers, John Urquidi, Mitch Jaurena, George Bennett, Donna Bennett

Efforts to restore sage grouse habitats in Idaho are meeting with tremendous success, thanks to volunteer groups, nonprofits like the Nature Conservancy, and state and federal agencies, including the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). ISDA is actively involved in sage grouse issues through its rangeland management program, under the direction of Ken Crane. The program provides support and expertise to Idaho rangeland livestock producers and land and wildlife management agencies for planning and management of vegetation and other rangeland resources through the application of Best Management Practices. Services are provided through collaborative efforts such as

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could turn the desert into the most valuable farmland in the world. They did it with ingenuity, perseverance and homegrown determination.

We're still the creative, hardworking people we always were, but we've adapted to a very different marketplace than what existed 100 years ago.

Director Takasugi

Our farms and ranches are now international businesses, with customers scattered the world over.

Today's Idaho farmer understands the need to be a player on the world stage.

He's savvy about the information-driven world in which we live. He understands that to be competitive, he must engage in a way his forefathers did not.

That's why we at the Idaho State Department of Agriculture have so much time and energy invested in international trade. It's why we work closely with the governor and the agriculture community to build trade partnerships overseas.

Agriculture is a venture that is in transition throughout the world. We don't know what farming and ranching of the future will look like in 5, 10 or 25 years. Developments in biotechnology may change how food is grown. Scientists are continually searching for ways to improve the quantity, quality and health benefits of our crops.

Researchers are turning to Idaho farmers to not only feed the nation but also provide clean, sustainable fuel.

Just 10 years ago, no one could have imagined that Idaho would have a $4.4 billion food industry, a growing economic sector for the state.

But we know this: The world will always demand good, quality agricultural products, and that demand will only grow larger over the next five decades.

We can't consume everything we produce – and 95 percent of the world's population is outside the U.S.

During our recent trade mission to Asia, we found that people -- from Tokyo to Shanghai to Taipei -- want the commodities that we produce in Idaho. We have the best beef, the best wheat, the best potatoes anywhere. In October, we'll hit the road again to Mexico with a strong story to tell about Idaho agriculture.

But it's not enough that we sit back and wait for destiny to intervene and for these markets to come to us. We must go to them.

We must invest in marketing and trade and get the word out about what we have to offer, build new relationships and maintain old friendships. Seven years ago, Governor Dirk Kempthorne had the foresight to recognize the need to pursue relationships with trade partners overseas. That investment is paying off dividends today.

At a recent press conference in the governor's office, Senator Dean Cameron made an important observation: There are three main ways to balance a state budget. 1) We can raise revenue. 2) We can cut services. 3) We can look for ways to expand economic opportunity in Idaho.

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— Pat Takasugi

These trade missions to Asia and Mexico represent a positive, smart way to boost the state's economy.

New jobs don't just happen. We have to go out and work for them.

Agriculture is one place we can make that happen. Our products can compete in these emerging markets.

Idaho already has a strong, thriving agricultural sector.

With the same gusto of the pioneers who settled the western frontier that Idaho once was, we'll make Idaho agriculture even stronger.

the Sage Grouse Local Working Groups, Coordinated Resource Management Program, the Challis Experimental Stewardship Program, and indirectly through support of the Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission, the Idaho Rangeland Committee, the Idaho Cattle and Idaho Wool Growers Associations and the Society for Range Management.

Crab Creek. Left, before the work began (Nov. '04). At right: After rehabilitation (May '05)

Additionally, ISDA Human Resources Manager Ken Miracle has been very active in sage grouse habitat restoration projects.

The projects have been a rousing success.

On the Crab Creek project, the objective was to increase the brood rearing habitat for sage grouse, water fowl and other nesting birds along Crab Creek in Owyhee County.

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Shown here, the Jarbidge Sage Grouse Local Working Group's efforts to restore habitat on the Antelope Pocket Allotment. Upper left and right: The group needed to harrow old decadent sage brush and then reseed native grasses, allowing new sagebrush to replace the old. At right: Success, as evidenced by the emergence of new vegetation. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Lands and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management worked the project.

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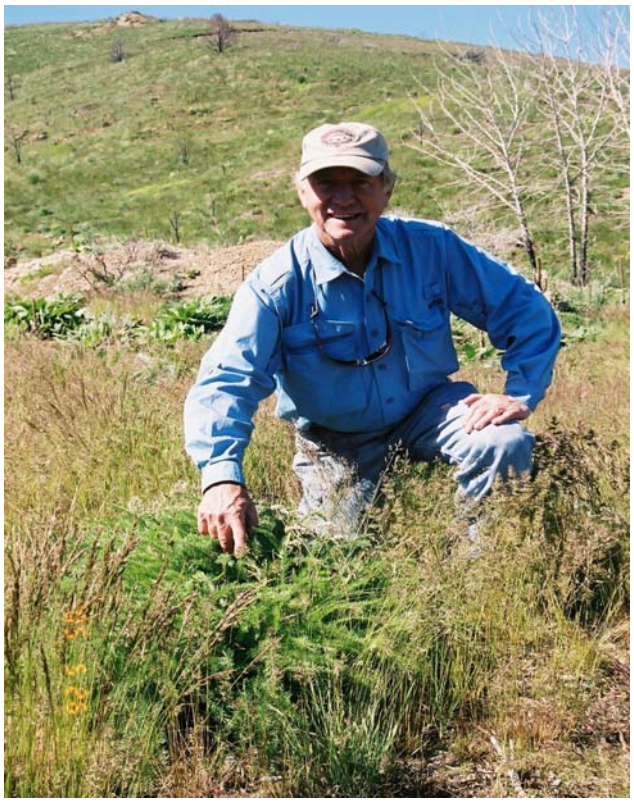
Existing water entrapments were improved to restore riparian area vegetation, thus expanding and enhancing brood-rearing habitat.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game is in the process of reviewing grant applications for a share of $300,000 for projects designed to improve sage grouse populations and habitat. There is also a small grant fund that provides money for time-sensitive projects of less than $5,000, and a $100,000 fund is available for projects that directly improve sage grouse habitat. Applications for those two special funds are accepted any time.



It's not all about the sage grouse. Rehabilitation projects also provide vegetation for an entire ecosystem. Here, Herb Meyer inspects a sparrow nest in a yarrow plant.

'Big Onion Gala' set for September 17

A "Big Onion Gala" to benefit Optimist Youth Football will be held September 17 at the Boise Centre on the Grove, the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee has announced.

The semi-formal dinner will launch the committee's new marketing initiative in cooperation with the New Leaf Foundation to increase the notoriety for the Idaho-Eastern Oregon onion.

The evening's activities will be highlights with a special honorarium presented to Boise State University Head Football Coach Dan Hawkins, and the crowning of the "Onion King."

The Onion King will serve as a celebrity figure who will ultimately carry the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion message worldwide.

The successful Onion King candidate will wear traditional western clothing and will possess characteristics that positively represent the region. He will also have to communicate the attributes of Idaho-Eastern Oregon onions at trade shows and media events nationwide.

For more information, visit the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee's new Web site at www.BIGONIONS.com.

Idaho Milk Production up 13.4 percent

Idaho milk production in July 2005 totaled 900 million pounds, a 13.4 percent increase from the same month a year ago, and an increase of 43 million pounds from June 2005, according to the Idaho Agricultural Statistics Service. Revised production for June 2005 totaled 857 million pounds, up 8 million pounds from the preliminary estimate and 12.8 percent above June 2004. The average number of milk cows during July was 459,000 head, up 8,000 head from June 2005 and up 32,000 head from July 2004.