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March 2007

HAY NEWS

New Extension Agronomist for Franklin and Benton Area

Dr. Phil Petersen assumed duties as a WSU Extension Educator headquartered at the Franklin County Extension Office on February 26th. Petersen fills the position formerly held by Dr. Tim Woodward. Phil's work will focus on forage production, agronomy, and farming systems in the Lower Columbia Basin.

Petersen holds PhD, MS, and BS degrees in agronomy and plant sciences from the University of Nebraska and Utah State University. His professional career includes over 22 years of work as a professional agronomist, and most recently as Market Development Manager with US Borax providing technical services on AG products.

"We are delighted to have an experienced and highly training individual such as Dr. Petersen join our county-based WSU Extension Faculty in the Tri-Cities area, and encourage growers throughout the area to make a point to get acquainted with Phil at their first opportunity", says WSU Extension's SE District Director Randy Baldree. Petersen may be contacted at the WSU – Franklin County Extension Office in Pasco at 412 West Clark Street, or by phone at 509-545-3511.

President's Letter

It always amazing to me how longer days and sunshine will lift the human spirit. I think this is especially true for hay farmers. Spring is coming and everyone has started their tractors up and is looking forward to another season. I am very optimistic about the upcoming year.

The 2007 WSHGA conference was a success once again. Attendance continues to rise every year. Your Board put together another informative conference that is worth way more than the price of admission. **I would like to give a big "Thank You" to all the sponsors and vendors.** Remember to support those who support us. The Board is already working on next year's conference and has booked Dr. Donald J. Jonovic as the keynote speaker. Dr. Jonovic is an author on family business management. You can read his articles in the Successful Farming Magazine.

The Mid Columbia Hay Chapter had their annual meeting/conference in February at the ATEC building at B.B.C.C. It was well attended by local growers and hay buyers. Three pesticide credits were offered and the speakers did a great job. All the coffee, cookies, and pastries you could eat and a hearty lunch was also available. The ATEC center is an excellent place to have a meeting. Save time on your calendar next year for this one.

High commodity prices have all the neighbors talking. Who's going to grow corn this year, when to sell your wheat, do I look at the futures markets? Farmers in the basin now have a few more profitable options to choose from in planning their enterprises. Commodities aren't the only things rising right now. Interest, rent, fertilizer, fuel, and equipment are just a few costs that have taken a big jump in the last year. As soon as I think I have figured out my break-even costs, another variable changes. Don't sell yourself short this year. The hay outlook right now is strong with a lot of opportunity to grow.

Your Board has grown in numbers this winter. Drex Gauntt of Kennewick and Tyler Halliday of Pasco were voted in at the annual conference. Travis Visker of Warden and Shane Russell of Othello have also been added to the Board this year. Paul Hudson of Clayton was voted in as the Northeast Chapters new President and has also joined the Board. Without Board members volunteering their time, this organization would not exist. If any grower has a concern about the hay industry, feel free to call me or get in contact with another Board member.

Shawn Clausen, President

Hay for Sale Section—Getting a Face Lift

The WSHGA is upgrading the Hay for Sale section on our web page so that it will provide each member that subscribes to the service with a miniature web page. Users will be able to post limited pictures of your product or farming operation as well as a short amount of text about your company and product. You will have your own url as well that starts with wa-hay.org and then your name. We hope to have it finished by next month. Our goal is to help you market your hay. If you already use this service you should think of setting up a paypal account or some other form of electronic payment for potential users.

Members are always welcome to attend the WSHGA Board Meetings
Next meeting: Thursday, April 12th at 6:00 p.m.— Best Western Hallmark Inn, Moses Lake

We would like extend a special thank you to **Darin Michel** for his outstanding support and leadership this past year as president of the WSHGA.

New Officers Elected

At the March 8, 2007 board meeting the Washington State Hay Growers Association board elected Shawn Clausen, Stokrose Farm in Warden, as its new president for the 2007 year.

Drex Gauntt, D & D Farming in Kennewick was elected vice-president and Randall Ririe, Ririe Farms, Mesa, was elected secretary/treasurer.

Is it Sustainable? Free Web Tool Allows Farmers to Evaluate Farm Management Practices

Farmers now have a free online tool available that allows them to compare their current management practices with “best practices” for sustainable agriculture. Developed by Food Alliance, a non-profit certification organization, through a partnership with Oregon State University and Washington State University, and with support from USDA Risk Management Agency, the tool offers information and resources to help farmers identify and implement strategies to manage production, environmental, human resource and other risks.

The on-line self-assessment tool looks at safe and fair working conditions, integrated pest management, soil and water conservation, and wildlife habitat conservation. In each of these areas, the tool provides background information on issues and risk management strategies, and links to resources and incentives to help farmers improve their management practices.



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Dr. Donald J. Jonovic has been confirmed for the 2008 WSHGA Annual Conference and Trade Show being held on January 16-17 at the Three Rivers Convention Center. Dr. Jonovic will present a keynote luncheon address as well as an afternoon seminar on January 17.

Dr. Jonovic focuses on the unique issues related to management development, growth and ownership transition in the successful owner-managed business. His professional consulting practice has included industrial and agricultural clients throughout North America. If you would like to know more about Dr. Jonovic—visit: www.familybusinessmgt.com

Farmers who enter information on their operation and practices can also receive an assessment of whether they would qualify for Food Alliance certification, or whether their management practices might support other “values-added” marketing opportunities. All information entered is kept strictly confidential. Interested farmers should visit <http://sat.foodalliance.org> for more information.

US Court Halts Sale, Planting of GMO Alfalfa

Roundup Ready alfalfa, a product of Monsanto Co. (MON), has been on the market for over a year already, and a limited amount of commercial planting has taken place. The court's ruling allows the continued harvest of the crop, but limits the future planting of the seeds.

The seeds cannot be sold after March 12 and the crop cannot be planted after March 30 until the court issues a final ruling. The court will hear oral arguments on April 27 and issue a final ruling thereafter.