Grain and Rain

The average price for soft white wheat at Portland for April was $4.76 per bushel while club wheat was bid at $6.92. Barley averaged $165.77 per ton at Portland. The barley has not jumped, but this is the first month in several that there has been any competitive bidding in Portland for that grain, so it only appears to have leaped upward.

The precipitation reported at the Sherman Experiment Station in Moro was 1.20 inches, enough to keep the crop year total to date at 1.27 inches above the long term average. In other weather notes, the evaporation was 2/10 of an inch below the long term average and the temperature for April was a couple degrees lower than expected. Who would have thought 10% ethanol in the gas would have such an impact on global warming?

Experiment Station Celebrates a Birthday…

The Sherman Experiment Station was founded in 1909, the second Experiment Station established by what is now Oregon State University, but the first one developed with crops and cropping systems as its primary focus. The Union Station near LaGrande was authorized just weeks earlier but with a focus on livestock and grazing management practices.

The Sherman Station was made a branch Station about 1970 when it was decided to designate the Pendleton station as the base of operations for the Columbia Basin Ag Research Center (CBARC) and merged the supervision and research work for the Sherman Station in Moro. The creation of CBARC also meant a closer tie with the USDA’s Ag Research Service (ARS).

But the birthday in 2009 means that 2010 is the 100th anniversary of the first field day, the first time researchers were able to share the fruits of their labors, with the various growers they were hired to assist.

The Station in Moro effectively represents nearly 2 million acres of ground in the PNW that is impacted by its research work into low rainfall, dryland crops and cropping systems studies.

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So in honor of the first field day, a special event has been planned for attendees to the Station on Wednesday June 16. This will not be your grandfather’s field day, but your grandfather may recognize many of the crops that have been tested over the century at the Sherman Station.

The program will cap with a hosted lunch but in the meantime you will see crops you have heard the old timers talk about, you will learn which rotations continually had the best economic return, you will be proud to learn how many new varieties of grains and grass were developed right here in the Mid-Columbia, and so much more. Be sure to plan to attend and to bring a camera as many of these crops may not be seen again and you will want something to show your own kids and grand kids. Do not miss this truly unique opportunity.

Pendleton Station’s Field Day

Due to the special celebration at the Sherman Field day on Wednesday, you will want to participate in the Pendleton Field Day on Tuesday June 15 in order to hear the latest research updates and results.

If enough people are interested we may offer a bus. The Field Day at Pendleton is different than what you see and hear at Moro and the station itself is worth seeing. It is smaller than the Sherman Station in total acres, but has more land suitable for research. And they do get a bit more rain occasionally, but you will still recognize the crops in discussion.

Post-CRP Grass Stands and Conservation Practices

(Reprinted from OWGL Newsletter and USDA)

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has reduced erosion by wind and water in Oregon’s Columbia Basin counties by an estimated five million tons annually. CRP has also significantly reduced sediment and nutrients in area streams and provided a great deal of wildlife food and cover in eastern Oregon. These accomplishments have been made, in part, through the establishment of grass cover.

Many producers will return their CRP acres to crop production or other uses when their contracts expire. Those who grow crops on highly erodible land (HEL), however, will be required to have a conservation compliance plan to remain eligible for USDA program payments and other benefits.

As a landowner with expiring CRP acres, you can use existing CRP grass stands as the basis for several practices to meet conservation compliance requirements on cropland or to reduce erosion and provide wildlife habitat on other land uses. In the Columbia Basin, these might include: conservation cover, grass waterways, contour buffer strips, field borders, filter strips and tall grass wind barriers.

Conservation Practices using CRP Grass

Conservation Cover/Grass Waterways

Many CRP fields include areas where water concentrates as it runs through or off the field. Without permanent vegetation to slow runoff and guide it off the field, gullies will form in these draws and sediment loss may be high.

When your return your CRP fields to crop production, the maintenance of established grass will protect the soil from concentrated flow erosion. You may also use grass waterways as outlets for terrace systems to convey terrace runoff from the field without causing erosion.

Contour Buffer Strips

You can establish contour buffer strips by alternating strips of CRP grass with wider cultivated crop strips fanned on the contour. The grass strips will slow runoff, reduce erosion, trap sediment, and provide food and nesting cover for wildlife. Used in combination with contour farming, contour buffer strips are an effective conservation practice.
Contour buffer strips using CRP grass can reduce erosion from 10 to 60 percent, depending on the slope and the width of the grass strips. For instance:

**Field Borders**

Field borders are strips of perennial vegetation established at field edges to prevent sheet, rill and gully erosion. You can maintain CRP grass in field borders to reduce erosion and to provide turning areas for farm equipment. These turning areas may provide access to strip cropping and contour buffer strip systems. Field borders can also provide wildlife food and cover while serving as a barrier to noxious weed invasions.

**Filter Strips**

Filter strips are used at the lower end of a field to capture runoff and sediment and prevent it from entering surface water supplies. You can use CRP grass for filter strips to reduce the transport of sediment and sediment-attached pesticides and nutrients to lakes and streams.

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Contour Buffer + Drop + Crop + Slope = Soil Erosion
Strips (20’ wide) Strips (180’ wide) Residue (10%) Reduction (50%)
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**Tall Grass Wind Barriers**

You can use perennial grass that is two to five feet in height to reduce wind erosion in dry crop-land areas with a high wind erosion hazard. The grass should be left in narrow bands from two to six feet in width perpendicular to erosive winds. The crop strip width between wind barriers will vary based on crop residue cover and soil surface roughness.

In Oregon’s high wind erosion areas, a typical field in winter wheat-fallow rotation with an un-sheltered distance of 3,000 feet will need 40 percent residue cover in the spring to meet conservation compliance requirements.

The same field with four-foot high CRP grass barriers spaced 200 feet apart would need only 20 percent residue cover to meet conservation compliance requirements.

**Conclusion**

As you begin planning what to do with your expiring CRP acres, consider keeping some CRP grass to use as part of your conservation plan. For assistance with planning and establishing any of these practices, contact your local NRCS office.

More detailed information on these and other practices can be found on the NRCS Web site at: http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/.

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**Haz Waste Events Coming**

Prepare for a pair of free Hazardous Waste Collection Events coming Saturday May 8 in Moro from 1-3 and Saturday June 26 in Tygh Valley from 10 am to 2 pm. These two collections are only for household materials and quantities. Do not bring latex paints... they are not hazardous and we expect an announcement shortly about a new latex paint collection program.

In addition, all ag producers in the Mid-Columbia (at least the Oregon Side) are invited to register for an ag waste collection, from 10 to noon also on Saturday May 8 in Moro. The first $400 in disposal costs is written off and there is a small fee (about a dollar per pound) for remaining wastes.

To pre-register, you must schedule an appointment with our contractor, PSC Environmental at 1-800-547-2436. From your list of un-used, unwanted and unknown ag wastes, the contractor can determine the disposal cost and tell you the costs after the first $400. It is a great way to clean up your house and the farm and make it safer for you and your employees and family.
Crop Tours May 18

Once again, the Wasco and Sherman County Extension Offices have coordinated their popular crop tours for the same day to make life easier on both speakers and attendees.

The **Wasco County Spring Crop Tour** begins at 7:30 am at the Auction Yard in The Dalles. The tour will feature three stops and conclude by 1 pm. Topics include: the newly established OSU No-Till Elite Variety Trials, CRP Take Out, equipment demonstrations including the new Wasco County Range Drill, Cross Slot Drill Opener, Implement Steering Technology, Case IH Ecola-Till Ripper, Spray Nozzle and Pressure Selection and Wheat/Cherry Interface.

The **Sherman County Crop Hop** follows beginning at 3:30 pm meeting at the Auscrete plant in Rufus, near the freeway access. Participants will view this durable, inexpensive building material and see a structure built with the material. From there we’ll learn about the do and don’ts and costs of handling Haz Mat spills and clean up. See the new Sherman County range drill, review the drill strip variety trials, then head to the Sherman Station, review the state elite cereal trials and discuss some fertilizer strategies for ecological and economical benefit. The tour concludes with a hosted barbecue about 6:45 pm.

There is no fee for these tours and pesticide credits have been requested.

BREAKING NEWS.....

Literally, word has just been received that the Department of Defense has dropped its ban on future wind farm development in the region. The ban came about because it was believed the blades interfered with a radar signals at a remote outpost near Fossil. The DoD has agreed to upgrade its old facility with newer technology that will not be disrupted by spinning blades.