Polk County Extension District Quarterly Meeting

November 26, 2012

Commissioner Pope called the meeting to order at 1:40 pm. Commissioner Wheeler moved that the agenda be accepted with the motion seconded by Commissioner Ainsworth. Commissioner Pope stated that next time the agenda needs to get distributed in a more timely manner. Commissioner Ainsworth moved and Commissioner Wheeler seconded that the minutes be accepted as presented. Commissioner Ainsworth brought up that he has a conflict with the meeting times designated for future meetings. A different day, other than Mondays needs to be selected. The suggestion was made to move meeting to a Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon after Board meetings, with Wednesdays having most support.

Commissioner Pope shared that the design of the quarterly meetings this year had been to structure a time for area Extension Faculty, serving Polk County, to come and give presentations about they work do. The presentations today will be given by Neil Bell, Extension Community Horticulturist; Dan McGrath, Extension Area Vegetable Crop Faculty; and Jeff Olsen, Extension Orchard Crops. They will each make a 15 minute presentation with additional follow-up time for questions.

Neil Bell shared what he does as a community horticulturist serving Polk and Marion Counties since 2000. He has a .75 FTE Fixed Term appointment. One of the things he does is oversee the Master Gardener program for which he gave a handout regarding their activities. In addition to teaching classes for the Master Gardener program and assisting the MG in answering clientele questions, he often makes house calls to assist in solving problems, providing a local service, and soliciting pictures of plant problems which he can then use as a part of future trainings. Neil calls upon a variety of Extension Faculty at OSU and at the NWREC to assist in answering technical question as needed. He also uses the NWREC for conducting research on low input landscape varieties. Plants which are cold-hardy, non-irrigated, minimal to no fertilizer and little to no pruning. Proof of this research being utilized is at the Oregon Garden parking lot, City of Dallas embankments, and the Monmouth Knox Street Xeriscape traffic island. Neil also reviews numerous publications including the horticulture section of the 2012 Insect Management Handbook. His curriculum development in Problem Plant Diagnosis for Master Gardner classes has led to a 2 credit CCC training course and a 3 credit OSU online E-Campus course. He also does weekly articles for the Statesman Journal and assists local retail nurseries with their questions.

Dan McGrath is an Associate Professor and has worked with the OSU Extension Service since 1987. In his 1.0 FTE assignment he serves as a Commercial Agriculture agent working with the processed vegetable industry in the nine counties that make up the Willamette River Basin. He also has a portion of his assignment designated as the OSU Extension Service Diversity Specialist and as the Linn County Leader. Dan works to insure that commercial growers raising vegetables, having the latest research information to allow for growth of production and reduction in any financial loss. The focus of much this assistance needs to be in the pest management of vegetable crops. He sets insect traps, pheromone traps, and uses field scouting methods to understand the patterns and behaviors of various pests in order to know the cycle over time to inject proper spraying times and applications. Sweet corn, broccoli, cauliflower and snap beans were the three vegetables highlighted in his presentation. For example, the work done in researching the 12 Spot Beetle activity in the Willamette Valley had him interacting with 115 growers and 10, 336 acres. The Broccoli loses due to insect contamination went from thousands of dollars in losses in 2005 to zero loses in 2006. His work assists growers in knowing when to spray their fields and in what amounts to economize their efforts and impacts.

Jeff Olsen, started in OSU Extension in 1985 and is currently a Professor in Extension Horticulture specializing in commercial tree fruit and nut production in the Willamette Valley. He assists growers in all aspects of hazelnut orchard management, including cultural and pest management, as well as economics. Hazelnut acreage in the valley totals 31,700 acres, for which Polk County grows 2,160 acres. He also works with commercial producers who grow sweet cherries (2,500 acres), tart cherries (725 acres), prunes (1,100 acres), peaches (400 acres), apples (970 acres), and pears (390 acres) in the valley. Jeff feels his main role is to provide up-to-date information to assist growers by giving them a competitive edge. He annually updates publications which provide the currently registered pesticide recommendations for each of the crop areas he works with. He also updates segments of the Pest Management Guide for the Willamette Valley for which 94% of the growers surveyed stated they use as a guide to their management practices. Jeff also writes a monthly column for the Pacific Nut Producer Journal which has 11,400 subscribers. In terms of educational programs, Jeff teaches a New Hazelnut Grower workshop, provides talks at the Nut Growers Society Annual Meeting in Portland, which last year saw 550 in attendance. And lastly, he is in the final developmental stages for a Hazelnut Sustainability Initiative Modules to support the growth of the hazelnut industry. Oregon (the only USA production grower) accounts for around 3-5% of the world’s production of hazelnuts, but we are the envy of the world for our advanced research, production, and quality of nuts. The key to our success has been the development of blight resistant varieties and choice of soil. Soil selection is the most important decision to influence Hazelnut Production.

The presentations were followed by a regional update from Derek Godwin, Regional Administrator for Region 9 – Benton, Linn, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties. Derek provided a written update and overview of the Federal and State Budgets impacting the OSU Extension Service. He highlighted that over the past few years, Extension has seen a reduction in positions due to budget reductions. A total of 58 positions have not been filled including: 34 in Agriculture, 10 in 4-H, 8 in Forestry, and 6 in Family & Community Health. We may see some increase in dollars in this years’ budget, but in reality that may just help pay for increases in health care and other costs not in positions. He shared the three investment proposals being suggested for OSU in this fiscal year including 1)Building Bridges to Prosperity…a commitment to promoting natural resources and economic well-being; 2) Open Campus… a commitment to increasing addressing educational access and partnerships; and 3) Food Systems…a commitment to ensuring healthy and sustainable food systems for all Oregonians. Derek also shared an administrative update of what he has been working on. An OSU Extension Budget report was not given, as Greg Hanson was not present. If there are questions, please contact Derek.

Pamela Rose presented a County Leader report which highlighted accomplishments since she stepped into this new .20FTE position on January 1, 2012. Barbara Nichols, PECAN Chair, gave a report on behalf of the Polk Extension Citizens Advisory Network. She highlighted the PECAN celebration in June, the marketing efforts at County Fair, the Fall PECAN meeting, the assistance from PECAN on the selection of the new Extension Office facility, the recently held Extension Open House, the establishment of staggered terms on the PECAN board, the District meeting today and the upcoming PECAN meetings.

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Craig Pope. Recorder, Pamela Rose