

Agriculture News

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---- Cotton News ----

More Speakers Confirmed for PCG Annual Meeting on April 5

By Mary Jane Buerkle
 More speakers have been added to the lineup for the 56th Annual Meeting of Plains Cotton Growers, Inc., scheduled for Friday, April 5, in the Banquet Hall of the Lubbock Memorial Civic Center.

PCG's Annual Meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. with registration, and the program will start promptly at 9 a.m. The meeting is held in conjunction with the Texas Cotton Ginners' Association Annual Meeting and Trade Show, April 4-5, 2013, in Lubbock.

The current slate of speakers includes U.S. Rep. Randy Neugebauer, who will discuss the Farm Bill and other pressing issues facing Congress; Texas Rep. Charles Perry, who will discuss state issues, including water; Brandon Willis, administrator for the USDA's Risk Management Agency, who will discuss crop insurance; and Baron Batch, running back for the NFL's Pittsburgh Steelers and veteran Texas Tech Red Raider, who will tell his story of perseverance, diligence, and survivorship.

Current PCG president Craig Heinrich of Slaton, Texas, will preside over the meeting and PCG Executive Vice President Steve Verett will report on the status of PCG operations and activities. The 2012 High Plains Cotton Agent of the Year will be presented during the meeting.

A buffet breakfast will be served from 7:00-8:30 a.m. in the Civic Center Banquet Hall sponsored by Monsanto and Deltapine. Breakfast will be provided free to all PCG Annual Meeting participants. Immediately following the PCG Annual Meeting will be the annual FiberMax Cottonseed Luncheon for PCG Annual Meeting participants and members of the FiberMax "One Ton Club." Lunch will be served in the Civic Center Banquet Hall.

Additional information about PCG can be found online at <http://www.plainscotton.org>.

PCG, Commodity Groups, Others Focus on Lesser Prairie-Chicken

By Shawn Wade
 The Lesser Prairie-Chicken (LEPC) has been on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's radar screen as a candidate for listing as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 for more than 10 years. During that time period, however, the LEPC has been a species that was considered a species of relatively low priority compared to others that garnered a significantly higher level of attention by the USFWS.

Over the past year, however, the USFWS increased the priority of the LEPC and several other species. In December 2012 the USFWS published a proposed rule in the Federal Register outlining its intent to list the Lesser Prairie-Chicken as a threatened species and currently is in the process of gathering comments and evaluating scientific data related to the proposed listing.

As a result of the USFWS action, Plains Cotton Growers and other commodity groups representing farmers and ranchers in the Panhandle and South

Plains region of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Kansas and Colorado have come together to oppose the listing of the LEPC as threatened. PCG has submitted formal comments in opposition of the proposed listing and also submitted testimony at the USFWS public hearing conducted in Lubbock on February 11, 2013.

In addition to submitting testimony and comments on the issue directly with the USFWS, a significant part of PCG's effort also has included working with the other agriculture stakeholder groups in the impacted region to represent agricultural landowner interests. The main focus of that effort is to encourage the development of a single voluntary, range-wide LEPC management plan.

Multiple entities, including state wildlife agencies, are working to develop range-wide plans. One of those groups is the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Interstate Working Group (LEPCIWG), which is primarily composed of state wildlife agency biologists and leadership from the five states impacted by the proposed listing as well as some energy and agriculture stakeholder groups. In addition, energy, agriculture, university and environmental groups are developing a similar plan, with essentially the same goals as the LEPCIWG. PCG is working with both groups to insure that private landowner interests are fully represented.

Ultimately, PCG believes the two efforts should be brought together to capitalize on their individual strengths and form a single, unified range-wide conservation plan that is able to generate voluntary habitat benefits and provide measurable financial incentives to landowners whether the LEPC is listed or not. Even if the two efforts are never brought together as a single, range-wide plan, PCG is working to insure that they both are able to meet the full regulatory requirements of the USFWS should the listing occur as proposed.

The purpose of any range-wide LEPC management plan must be to provide a mechanism through which landowners can voluntarily join efforts to conserve and improve LEPC habitat and increase LEPC populations, while simultaneously earning regulatory protections and monetary compensation through the generation of tradable conservation habitat credits.

"The Lesser Prairie-Chicken had become a real conversation starter over the past couple of months," PCG Executive Vice President Steve Verett said. "It is critical that PCG and other ag groups stay involved as the USFWS goes through the steps to determine whether or not a listing of the Lesser Prairie-Chicken as a threatened species is warranted. Regardless, we will continue with other groups from the five-state region impacted by the USFWS' proposed listing to protect the needs of landowners and encourage a cooperative effort among other stakeholders, wildlife agency personnel and the federal government."

Upcoming Area Ag Conferences

NOTE: A complete list, along with program agendas when made available, can be found on the Plains Cotton Growers website at <http://www.plainscotton.org/agconferences.html>

March 25 - Beef Cattle Short Course, Post - Contact Greg Jones, County Extension Agent-AG, for more information at 806-495-4400.

March 26 - Rebuilding the Cow Herd, Rita Blanca Coliseum, Dalhart - Contact Mike Bragg, County Extension Agent-AG, for more information at 806-244-4434.

March 26 - Business Expo, Mallet Center, Levelland - Contact Kerry Siders, Extension Agent-IPM, for more information at 806-894-3159.

March 27 - Pre-Plant Cotton Update, Tahoka - Contact Bryan Reynolds, County Extension Agent-AG, for more information at 806-561-4562.

March 28 - Beef Issues Meeting, Clarendon - Contact Leonard Haynes, County Extension Agent-AG, for more information at 806-874-2141.

March 29 - Prepping for Peanut Workshop, Brownfield - Contact Chris Bishop, County Extension Agent-AG, for more information at 806-637-4060.

If you have another conference to add to this list, or if you have an agenda you'd like to link, please call PCG at (806) 792-4904.

Rainwater harvesting workshop set for April 13 in Amarillo

By Kay Ledbetter
 kledbetter@ag.tamu.edu

AMARILLO - A rainwater harvesting workshop will be held April 13 at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in Potter County, 3301 S.E. 10th Ave., Amarillo.

This course will provide an overview of rainwater harvesting, its uses and applicability to conserving rainfall as a natural resource, said Brandon Boughen, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resource agent for Potter County.

The workshop will begin with registration at 2:30 p.m. and will end at 5 p.m. Cost of the workshop will be \$15, payable at the door, and preregistration is recommended, Boughen said.

Concepts and techniques Boughen will introduce are passive and active rainwater harvesting, including rain gardens, landscape design, rain barrels, sanitation and maintenance. He also will discuss use of rainwater for wildlife, livestock, pets, landscape and vegetable production, and in-home use.

Everyone attending the workshop will have the opportunity to see a rainwater barrel built and may purchase as many harvesting barrels as they need, Boughen said.

For more information or to reserve a seat, contact Boughen at 806-373-0713.

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