
Consider Controlled Traffic on Your Farm

Controlled traffic is a method to manage soil compaction, whereby all farm equipment is the same width so that traffic is confined to specific paths year after year, and the remainder of the soil is untouched. Controlled traffic is usually matched with high residue farming systems, although the technique can be practiced in conventionally tilled fields, as well, with the aid of guidance systems and GPS technology.

Randall Reeder, Ohio State University Extension agricultural engineer says controlled traffic offers growers some planting advantages on wet soils. "If a grower has been practicing controlled traffic for, say three years, the driving lanes will be firm, but the untouched soil will be loose and dry out faster, giving growers the opportunity to plant earlier." That quicker planting could add up to better yields. "Farmers, as a whole, spend a lot of effort and money to get corn planted early. For example, switching from a six-row planter to a 12-row planter, or trading a tractor with tires for a rubber tracked vehicle," said Reeder. "Think of controlled traffic as just another management option to consider".

Not only does controlled traffic give growers a jumpstart on planting, the practice also affords growers spraying and harvesting advantages, as well as long-term ideal soil conditions for plant growth.

Research has suggested that compaction affects crop yields, because compacted soils shut out necessary water and nutrients, leading to poor root development and subsequent poor growth performance.

"The aim of controlled traffic is to minimize the amount of soil that gets driven on, eliminating compaction where plant roots are growing," said Reeder. "The average farmer will drive on three-fourths of the field in a two-year period. With controlled traffic, anywhere from 50 percent to 80 percent of the field never gets driven on and that includes 100 percent of the soil under a corn crop."

Despite the advantages of controlled traffic, transitioning to such a system can take time or money, or both. Getting all equipment the same width is the top priority, and minimizing the number of traffic lanes is next, said Reeder.

"A typical farmer is going to have equipment with mismatched widths - for example, a 30-foot planter, a 24-foot drill, a 15-foot combine head for corn, a 20-foot grain platform and a 50-foot sprayer," he said. "If that farmer wants to switch to controlled traffic, he could do it gradually as equipment wears out and is traded in. It might take five years, but the cost would be minimal. Switching everything overnight could be expensive."

He added that the perceived benefit of controlled traffic does not always equal the perceived cost. "Farmers might say, 'Well, that's a lot of trouble and I'm doing alright'," said Reeder. "What they really need to consider, though, is how much compaction is costing them in yield, and then realize that controlled traffic over the long-term will be beneficial."

To hear more about soil compaction and controlled traffic from Randall Reeder, attend this year's High Residue Farming under Irrigation workshop. See workshop article for more information. A. McGuire

EPA Begins a Re-Evaluation of Atrazine

The EPA recently announced that they will launch a comprehensive re-evaluation of atrazine to assess any possible links between atrazine and cancer, as well as other health problems. A Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) for atrazine has been scheduled for November 3, 2009. Stephen A. Owens, EPA assistant administrator for prevention, pesticides and toxic substances said, "We are taking a hard look at the decision made by the previous administration on atrazine," he added "Our examination of atrazine will... help determine whether a change in EPA's regulatory position on this pesticide is appropriate." Atrazine was re-registered by the EPA in 2003, and as recently as July, EPA staff had argued that current regulations were adequate. The registrant, Syngenta stands behind the safety of atrazine. For more information visit the EPA's website at http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/reregistration/atrazine/atrazine_update.htm. C.H. Wohleb

Alfalfa Seed Prices and Variety Yields

The fall alfalfa seeding is in the ground and up and ready for winter. Growers may be writing checks for their seed bill and wondering if they could have gotten by with some lower cost seed. With lower priced seed in the \$2.75 range and high end seed in the \$4 range this is a legitimate question to ask since no one seems to have money to waste these days.

In analyzing the WSU/WSGA Variety trials I added up the yields of the top variety, the top five varieties, the bottom 5 varieties, and the bottom variety for the last 10 years of variety trials in the Othello and Pasco areas and calculated averages as shown below.

	10-yr Average
Top Variety	8.6842
Average Top 5 Varieties	8.4596
Average bottom 5 Varieties	7.1772
Bottom Variety	6.7579

If you do a little math using this data, the top 5 yielding varieties produced 3.83 ton more alfalfa over the three years than did the 5 lowest yielding varieties. Using the seed price range quoted above and assuming the five highest yielding varieties' seed cost \$4.00 per pound and the 5 lowest yielding varieties' seed all cost \$2.75 per pound the difference would be \$1.25 per pound. If we assumed 20 pounds seed per acre the additional cost would be \$25 per acre. So \$25 dollars worth of seed potentially yielded 3.83 ton of alfalfa. This equates to an additional \$6.53 seed cost for every ton of alfalfa — a reasonable return for the investment. Buying the correct varieties is an important decision that should not be based on seed cost alone. P. Petersen

Washington Cattlemen's Annual Convention

The Washington Cattlemen's Association (WCA) has organized an exciting and educational program for their annual convention November 12-14 at the Red Lion Hotel in Pasco. Prior to the convention, on November 8, the Pfizer Cattlemen's College will discuss topics around the theme of "Beef Production Technology: Protecting Your Interests with safe Beef". Registration for the Cattlemen's College is \$20. Discussion topics will include social changes and their impact on beef production technology, using technology to feed the world, understanding immunology and vaccinology, and responsible use of technology. For complete information on the Cattlemen's College and the WCA Annual Convention contact WCA at 509-925-3004 or go online to www.washingtoncattlemen.org. S.M. Smith

2009 PNVA Pre-Conference Workshops: Succession Planning and Irrigation

The Pacific Northwest Vegetable Association is offering two pre-conference workshops on Tuesday, November 10. These will take place at the Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick the day before the PNVA Conference.

- 1) A Succession Planning Workshop will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. This workshop will cover the legal issues of estate planning to ensure that your business has the best chance of remaining a successful enterprise in the future.
- 2) An Irrigation Workshop will take place from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. This training will cover water conservation through properly installed and managed drip and center pivot irrigation systems, soil moisture monitoring technology, and calculating chemigation injection rates. There will be a hands-on demonstration of various center pivot sprinkler packages, and a hands-on demonstration of chemigation injection rate calibration. All attendees to this workshop will receive "The Pacific Northwest Irrigator's Pocket Guide".

For more information about these workshops, go to www.pnva.org. The cost is \$50 for PNVA members and \$83 for non-members. Class size is limited to 50 people. C.H. Wohleb

2009 PNVA Annual Conference and Trade Show

The Pacific Northwest Vegetable Association's 23rd Annual Conference and Trade Show is November 11-12 at the Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick. The trade show will include more than sixty exhibitors. Prizes will be given away daily. The conference program will begin at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, November 11 with concurrent sessions for onions and general vegetable/alternative crops. A keynote luncheon on November 11 will feature Mark Measer, Special Agent in Charge, US-EPA, Criminal Investigations Division. The keynote presentation "Criminal Enforcement of Environmental Laws – Deterrence and a Level Playing Field" will cover the purpose of the criminal program and how the criminal program functions. After Wednesday's meetings have adjourned, there will be a Trade Show Social with hors d'oeuvres and a no host bar. The following day, meetings will begin at 8:00 a.m. with concurrent pest management and organic/sustainable sessions. The conference will adjourn at 1:00 p.m. The conference agenda and registration information can be found at www.pnva.org. C.H. Wohleb

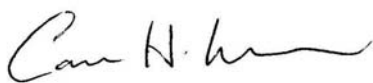
High Residue Farming under Irrigation Workshop Dec. 2, Moses Lake

Irrigated farmers who want to reduce irrigation, fuel, and labor costs should consider attending the upcoming workshop, "High Residue Farming under Irrigation." This daylong workshop will be held on Wednesday, December 2, starting at 8:30 a.m. in room 1870 of the ATEC Building, Big Bend Community College, Moses Lake. WSU Extension, Grant-Adams Area, is presenting the workshop.

Farming systems that maintain high amounts of residue on the soil, such as no-till, strip-till, and mulch-till, have been shown to reduce fuel use and machinery wear, cut labor costs, reduce irrigation water requirements, and increase winter water storage. They are highly developed in the Midwest and in other countries including Canada and Brazil. The focus of this workshop will be on systems that will work on irrigated farms. The 2009 workshop will feature Ohio State University Extension agricultural engineer Randal Reeder. Reeder will speak on soil compaction and a controlled traffic system to help farmers avoid compaction in their fields.

Other topics will include no-till drills, organic no-till vegetables, soil conditions at planting, and results of WSU's high residue farming demonstration fields. Local farmers will also share their experience in using high residue farming for raising grain corn, sweet corn, onions, and wheat.

To request a brochure and registration form, contact WSU Extension, Grant/Adams Area, at 509-754-2011 ext. 413, or by email to amcguire@wsu.edu, or look online at www.grant-adams.wsu.edu. The registration fee for the workshop, which includes lunch and refreshments, is \$25 before November 25 and \$35 thereafter. Five CCA credits will be available. A. McGuire



Carrie H. Wohleb: Vegetables, Vegetable Seed
Andy McGuire: Ag Systems, Cereal Crops
Sarah M. Smith: Animal Science
Phil Petersen: Agronomy, Forage
Karen M. Lewis: Tree Fruit, Grape Horticulture
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Resources:

Unless stated otherwise, you may request a print version of these resources:

None

Underlined resources are available online through links from our homepage:

<http://grant-adams.wsu.edu>

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Calendar

November

- 4-6 **59th Annual Weed Conference**, Yakima Convention Center, Yakima, WA
<http://www.weedconference.org>
- 10 **Pacific Northwest Vegetable Association Pre-Conference Workshops**, 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Concurrent Workshops on Irrigation & Succession Planning, Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, WA, <http://www.pnva.org> (Register early, because class size is limited)
- 10 **Cattle Producers of WA** monthly meeting. Bob's Café, 6 p.m., Moses Lake. Call 509-347-6655 or www.cattleproducersofwa.org.
- 11-12 **Pacific Northwest Vegetable Association Conference and Trade Show**, Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, WA, <http://www.pnva.org>
- 30-2 **Far West Agri-Business WA Winter Conference**. Red Lion Hotel, Pasco, WA
<http://www.fwaa.org>.

December

- 2 **High Residue Farming under Irrigation workshop**, ATEC Center of Big Bend Community College, Moses Lake; <http://grant-adams.wsu.edu>, Andy McGuire
- 2-4 **Hermiston Farm Fair & Trade Show**. Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Hwy 395. Agriculture-related seminars will be offered all three days. Oregon and Washington pesticide recertification credits will be available, in addition to CCA credits. See <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/hermiston>.

January 2010

- 13, 14 **CBCCA Annual Short Course**, ATEC at Big Bend Community College, Moses Lake
- 15 **Producer Pesticide Recertification Day**, ATEC at Big Bend Community College, Moses Lake
- 20 **Thirteenth Annual Noxious Weed Conference**, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Wallenstein Performing Arts Center, Big Bend Community College, Moses Lake. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m., no cost or pre-registration required, contact information: 754-2011, ext. 375 or 750-4022
- 26-28 **Washington State Potato Conference**, Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, WA, <http://potatoconference.com>