Welcome!

My name is Mike Bondi and I am the new Director of the North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWREC) located just south of Wilsonville. I was appointed the Interim Director for NWREC this past January. In August, my position became permanent.

I have been an Extension Forestry and Christmas Tree Agent with Oregon State University for the past 33 years. The majority of these years have been located at the Clackamas County Extension office in Oregon City. Besides my Extension Agent role, I have been the administrative Staff Chair for all Extension programs in that county for the last dozen years.

My position at NWREC is the result of a statewide administrative reorganization for Extension. Instead of Staff Chairs in each county, we now have 12 Regional Administrators in Oregon—each with 2 to 5 county Extension offices and several of us with responsibility for a Research and Extension Center, too. The main driver for this reorganization is cost control—trying to deal with declining state budget support and the need to “do more with less.”

My new charge is to administer the Clackamas County Extension office and the North Willamette Research and Extension Center. These two locations include about 20 faculty, a dozen research and program assistants, and a dozen clerical and farm support staff.

I expect to “split” duty between these two locations spending about 1/2 time at each. I don’t expect to have a very rigid schedule—Extension isn’t like that. We have to be flexible with meetings, field visits and daily needs. The clerical staff at Clackamas Extension and NWREC should know my daily schedule and when they might expect me on-site.

I hope to meet each of you. I am committed to ensuring that the work we do at NWREC meets the needs of the agricultural sectors that this Research and Extension Center is tasked to address. We will need the help of the clients we serve to provide input, counsel and support. This newsletter is my first attempt to communicate with the people who care about NWREC and would like to know about what we are doing and why—and, the difference our work makes in the community.

I will produce this newsletter, Down on the Farm, quarterly. I believe communicating with our friends, clients, stakeholders and those who care, is the best place to start. We will share information about what’s happening at NWREC, the work our faculty and staff are doing, special features about our loyal friends and cooperators, and a calendar of coming events. Feel free, as always, to offer your comments, feedback or suggestions.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Michael C. Bondi  
Director of the North Willamette Research and Extension Center

Community Open House

Research Technician, Pete Sturman (back to camera), loads the hay wagon for a tour of NWREC during the Community Open House in July.

Advisory Council Forming at NWREC

The North Willamette Research and Extension Center will commission an Advisory Council in November. The purpose of the group will be to provide oversight and guidance for research and education programs at the Center—to be “eyes and ears” in the community, to ask tough questions, and to help come up with creative solutions. The Council will include representatives from each of the sectors of agriculture served by NWREC, as well as county government, businesses and organizations serving agriculture, and friends and neighbors.

Advisory groups are the heart and soul of Extension’s work in the community. We haven’t had an active Advisory group at NWREC recently and look forward to working closely with this important group of citizens. Down on the Farm will introduce our Advisory Council in the winter edition.
Nursery Researcher Moves East

Jim Owen, Nursery Researcher at NWREC for the past five years, resigned in August to assume a similar position with Virginia Tech located at their Hampton Roads Agricultural Research and Extension Center near Virginia Beach, Virginia. The focus of Owen’s research program while in Oregon was soils, nutrient management and irrigation. Jim was a very creative and young faculty member who earned the loyal respect from the industry he served. We wish Jim and his family well as they begin this new chapter.

Jim joins us at Down on the Farm to share his work and new life on the East Coast.

The Farm: Jim, tell us about your decision to head back East and leave Oregon.

Jim: I was very content in my position at Oregon State and only looking ahead to tenure and the future of my program and the industry. I was lucky to have an established and unbelievable team comprised of staff, great colleagues and excellent students. I had the fortune of working alongside Heather Stoven, faculty research assistant extraordinaire, who continues to oversee day-to-day production research at NWREC. Unexpectedly, Dr. Harris at Virginia Tech contacted me to see if I would be interested in applying for the nursery position at Hampton Roads AREC in Virginia Beach. Hesitantly I applied, interviewed and toured the area with my wife, Ellen. Ellen and I wrestled with the decision and ultimately decided it was the best choice for us and our family. This was one of the toughest decisions of our lives, but we hope living in Virginia will allow us to provide more support and spend greater amount of time with our extended family. I also am very excited about working with the growers from Virginia and hope to help them prepare for the future of the nursery industry.

The Farm: As you reflect now on your time in Oregon and at NWREC, what do you consider your most important accomplishments? What will you remember most fondly?

Jim: I would have to say the biggest accomplishment was training students that have continued on in industry and academia. As for research and Extension, I actually believe that I learned more from growers than them from me. The fondest memories are of the people who made working everyday enjoyable and made my success in Oregon possible. Thus, it was the daily interaction with innovative and caring growers, professional colleagues, NWREC staff and wonderful students.

The Farm: Describe the nursery industry in Virginia and how it compares to Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.

Jim: There are many similarities and differences. Each region is somewhat codependent on the other. Virginia growers are near the largest population centers and shipping facilities in the country. Therefore, they supply horticultural crops (annuals, perennials and trees) to homeowners and retailers from a liner stage to finished product that can range from a 4-inch pot to 50-gal tree within the same operation. Nursery operations in Oregon seem to be more specific to a given crop or size with the majority of the product being exported from the state to other nursery operations throughout the United States.

The Farm: What will be likely priorities for your nursery research and outreach program on the East Coast?

Jim: My new position is split: 40% Extension Specialist with statewide responsibilities and 60% research. The details are yet to be determined on my exact research priorities; however I will continue to focus on water and nutrient management. Specifically, I will assist the growers to increase efficiency, decrease costs and meet regulation and criteria that is currently being researched in the Chesapeake Bay area. I also hope to conduct applied and basic research that provides

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Foundation and Charitable Organizations

Tour NWREC

More than 35 representatives from foundation and charitable organizations toured NWREC this past May to learn about research and development done by OSU for the agricultural industry and the importance of this work to Oregon’s economy.

Calendar of Events

The events listed below are education programs that OSU faculty at NWREC have designed or provide leadership to organize. Always check the NWREC website for additional events, details, and registration information. Go to http://oregonstate.edu/dept/NWREC.

November 21 NWREC Advisory Council (5:00-8:00pm). Contact: Bondi

November 29 Nursery Pathology/Bilingual Education Advisory Committee (5:00-8:00pm). Contact: Santamaria

December 7 Blueberry Nutrition Workshop (9:00am-Noon). Contact: Yang

December 15 Blueberry Pruning Workshop (1:00-4:00pm). Contact: Yang

January 10 North Willamette Horticultural Society meeting–organic crops day (8:30am-4:30pm). Location at Clackamas County Event Center, Canby. Contact: Andrews

January 11 North Willamette Horticultural Society meeting–vegetable crops day (8:30am-4:30pm). Location at Clackamas County Event Center, Canby. Contact: Kaufman

January 12 North Willamette Horticultural Society meeting–berry crops day (8:30am-4:30pm). Location at Clackamas County Event Center, Canby. Contact: Kaufman

January 24 Blueberry Workshop at NW Ag Show/Oregon Hort Society–(9:00am-4:30pm). Expo Center. Contact: Yang

503-678-1264 oregonstate.edu/dept/NWREC
Getting to Know You...  
The Parkers—Very Special Friends

Our theme for the new Friends of the North Willamette Research and Extension Center organization is, “We all need friends.”

And, one of the best models for the kinds of friends we have at NWREC is the Parker family—Joan and her late husband, Jack. Joan is a neighbor along our west property line to the farm and lives in a beautiful home she designed for her husband who was handicapped.

The Parkers found their dream location for a place to live in 2000 next to NWREC. The only problem was that there was already an almost new two-story house on the property and not adequate for Jack’s needs. The solution was to remove the existing house and make way for a new one.

A local moving company offered to purchase the house for $1 and move it for free. But, the Parkers found out that OSU needed additional office space at NWREC and another option would be to remove the property fence between the Parker’s property and NWREC—moving the house across the field and onto the farm. The Parkers paid to have the building commercially moved in order to donate it to OSU.

“This seemed like such a natural solution,” said Joan. “But, when we were able to get the house picked up and moving, the trailer got stuck in the field out on the farm. It was May and the ground was a little too soft.” None-the-less, the Parker House—as it is called today at NWREC—did get moved across the field and has been located just south of the Main Office building for the past ten years. The Parker house is home to a half dozen faculty and research staff—plus graduate students, summer interns, and seasonal employees.

“Parker House is a great office location for the staff and serves as the lunch area and gathering place,” said Mike Bondi, Director of NWREC. “It’s like a home—because it actually is. The kitchen and dining spaces are especially handy and not something often available in most office buildings.”

Joan Parker has continued to be a great friend to NWREC over the years. She brings home-baked cookies to the office and was the first person to respond to the new Friends campaign launched last July. Thank you, Joan, for all you’ve done...and, still do!

Introducing Friends of NWREC

The North Willamette Research and Extension Center has a great heritage. There has been a university agricultural research center in Oregon’s north valley area for the past 75 years. Throughout this time, our focus has been to strengthen and support farmers who provide the food and fiber we all depend on.

As I begin my tenure as the Director of NWREC, it is apparent that we need a Friends group—loyal and faithful supporters who see the value in the work done at the Center and desire to see this continue...to help us, literally, keep the lights on and the gates open. As I look at our budget and needs at the Center, my goal is to raise $100,000 in extramural funds each year.

Our brand new Friends of the North Willamette Research and Extension Center organization is designed to share our agriculture story, what we are doing and the difference this work is making in the community. The Friends of NWREC is a membership organization. My goal is to make membership reasonable for everyone to participate. I see us reaching out to the farmers and the producers we serve, the business community, agriculture organizations, and the public. If everyone participates a little, we all will accomplish a lot. This effort needs to be on-going and sustainable.

Declining state revenues are making managing the Center more and more difficult. Decreasing state budgets mean that we can’t always replace staff that leave or retire. Funds for infrastructure improvements and maintenance at the Center are mostly non-existent. The roof on the main office building has never been replaced in 50 years—and, it’s leaking now. Water running down an interior wall in our stairwell area is what greeted me as the new Interim Director last winter. It has been too many years since the office building was last painted. Same with the barns. Our Cravo greenhouse needs new shade cloths, so we can use this research space for what it was designed for...and on and on. None of this is real glamorous, but necessary to support our mission in research, education, and outreach programs.

The bottom line is that we need to diversify our revenue sources that support NWREC. We need to be creative. Joining the Friends of NWREC—for as little as $25 per year—will help support the Center and what we do...and, provide resources to cover expenses not now possible.

Our new Friends campaign brochure is included on pages 5 and 6 of this newsletter. You will see several levels of financial support that are possible in the Friends program. We welcome any and all Friends and will list our members (with your permission, of course). Together we can make a difference! Please join us and share this information with others. See our website front page for information about the Friends and to download copies of the brochure.

We all thank you!

Make sure you're on our Down on the Farm newsletter mailing list...

All members of the Friends of North Willamette Research and Extension Center will receive the quarterly Down on the Farm newsletter plus special mailings and announcements of activities and events. Also, all Friends will be invited to our annual appreciation gathering each fall at the Center. Be a part of our inner circle!

Join today...and tell a friend, neighbor or family member.
Bernadine Strik, Emily Vollmer, Gil Buller, David Bryla, and Dan Sullivan
Dept. Horticulture, NWREC, USDA-ARS, and Dept. Crop & Soil Science, Oregon State University

This project, established as a certified organic planting at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center, was initiated in response to industry requests and was designed with input from an advisory group that included growers using both conventional and organic production systems, as well as leaders in the nursery and fresh- and processed fruit handling industries.

The long-term goal of this project is to develop organic production systems for highbush blueberry that maximize plant growth, yield, and fruit quality, facilitate weed, water, and nutrient management, and provide economic benefit to growers.

The one-acre study was established at the NWREC in October 2006 and was certified organic in May, 2008. Treatments consist of two cultivars (‘Duke’ and ‘Liberty’), two production methods (raised bed or flat ground), three weed management practices [sawdust mulch + hand weeding; compost (yard debris) + sawdust mulch + organic herbicides as needed; and landscape fabric (weed mat)], and two types and rates of organic fertilizer (feather meal and liquid fish fertilizer at 25 or 50 lb N/a in 2007-2009 and 45 and 90 lb N/a in 2010-11).

Our key findings to date are briefly described here. We highlight this planting at our annual Blueberry Field Day at the NWREC.

Cumulative yield from years 2-4 (2008-10) was 48% greater on raised beds than flat ground, corresponding to improved plant growth. Although the soil at this research site is considered to be well-drained, there was still an advantage to growing on raised beds. Yields for the raised bed plantings have, in general, been similar to what is expected for conventional fields, averaging about 4 tons/acre in 2010 (year 4).

On average, plants fertilized with the high rate of feather meal or the low rate of fish emulsion had the greatest yield, whereas fertilizing with the highest rate of fish emulsion tended to reduce yield in both cultivars to date.

Plants mulched with yard debris compost topped with sawdust (compost+sawdust) and weed mat produced greater yield than those mulched with sawdust in 2009 and 2010.

‘Duke’ and ‘Liberty’ had lower fruit firmness when fertilized with the low rate of feather meal than with fish emulsion or the high rate of feather meal. Duke fruit were firmer and had higher percent soluble solids (Brix or sweetness) when fertilized with a high rate of fish emulsion. Our goal is to determine why fertilizer is affecting fruit firmness.

Weed pressure has been consistently low with weed mat and high with compost+sawdust. In 2010, for example, sawdust+compost mulched plots required 83 hr/acre for hand-weeding and 20 hr/acre for contact herbicide application (total of 103 hr/acre + $60/acre product) compared to 88 hr/acre to hand-weed in sawdust and 18 hr/acre in weed mat mulched plots.

Percent soil moisture was maintained in a suitable range for good plant growth through careful management of irrigation.

Work on shoot growth rate, fruit bud set, tissue and soil nutrient status, soil microbial content, weed management, production economics, root growth and development of a compost suitable for blueberry were also conducted in 2009-2010 and work is ongoing. We recently published a new cost of production guide for organic blueberry production.

While this planting is still relatively young, growth and yield for most treatments have been similar to what has been observed in conventional systems. The best treatments so far have been growing plants on raised beds with a low rate of fish emulsion or a high rate of feather meal on either weed mat or compost+sawdust mulch.

Economic returns to date have been comparable to conventional systems, depending on the organic production method used.

We thank our advisory board members and the organizations that have provided funding for this project: The Oregon Blueberry Commission, the Northwest Center for Small Fruits Research, the Washington Blueberry Commission, the NIFA-OREI, and industry contributors.
The Friends of North Willamette Research & Extension Center

Join today to support Food, Families & Farms

We all need Friends...

The Friends of North Willamette Research and Extension Center recognize the important role of Oregon agriculture in our lives—and the necessary research and development work that must be done to keep our farmers on the cutting edge of change.

Unfortunately, shrinking federal and state budgets that support agricultural research and development now limit the ability of NWREC to meet the needs of local farmers who are looking for help to find new and safer pesticides, to develop organic crop production methods, and to reduce labor costs through improved technology—to name just a few of their priorities.

Reduced budgets have resulted in deteriorating infrastructure at the Center, limited technological improvements and practices, and a lack of outreach to the public in the Portland metropolitan community.

How Friends Works

The Friends of North Willamette Research and Extension Center was formed to bring together a wide group of people and organizations who believe in the importance of agricultural to our lives, well-being and our economy. Friends want to support the North Willamette Research and Extension Center and keep it viable and able to serve the needs of local farmers. Friends is a member organization that provides private funds directed to support the Center to improve the overall facilities, upgrade technologies, and to reach out to the public. All donations to the Friends are made to the OSU Foundation and its specific account for NWREC. All contributions are tax-deductible according to IRS guidelines.

Find Out How You Can Join Friends

Turn the page and learn more.
How You Can Join the Friends

Membership in the **Friends of North Willamette Research and Extension Center** is open to any individual, business and organization and is renewable annually. All members receive quarterly *Down on the Farm* newsletters describing the latest research and education outreach of the Center, up-close stories about our staff and supporters, and special invitations to members-only events and activities.

Please help spread the word about the **Friends of North Willamette Research and Extension Center**. We all rely on the bounty of harvest from our local farmers—let’s ensure their success so they can support all of us!

**Friends of NWREC**

Oregon State University’s North Willamette Research and Extension Center is fortunate to have many great Friends—all concerned about the future of agriculture in the region. Several have come forward, on their own, to make a difference how they can.

Bill Zimmerman and Joe Beaudoin are farmers in southwest Washington. Last January, they provided a $1,000 check to NWREC at the annual North Willamette Horticulture Society meeting in Canby. Bill and Joe presented the check on behalf of Clark and Cowlitz County farmers who value the research and education they get from NWREC. According to Bill, “We don’t have anything like this anymore in Washington. We know what we don’t have and we want to make sure your programs continue. NWREC’s work is critical to our needs.”

When long-time Extension Vegetable Agent, Bob McReynolds, retired in June 2010, the farmers he worked with for the past 20 years began thinking about what they could do to ensure the continuation of Bob’s Extension program. With reduced budgets, refilling a vacant position nowadays is not always possible. Bob’s growers are taking matters into their own hands. Ed Montecucco and Mike Iverson—vegetable farmers from Canby and Aurora, respectively—made the first commitments to establish an endowed faculty position that will provide future funding for Bob’s position. During the first six months of the Endowment campaign, more than $100,000 was committed. Once complete, the endowment will generate perpetual funding for the Extension vegetable faculty member who will be located at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center.

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Membership—Friends of North Willamette Research and Extension Center

**YES, I WANT TO BECOME A FRIEND OF THE NORTH WILLAMETTE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER!**

Name: ____________________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________

City, State, Zip: ____________________________

Phone(s): ____________________________________________

Email(s): ____________________________________________

☐ I prefer to remain anonymous. Please do not publish my name in future publications.

Membership Category (circle one):

- $25 Member
- $100 Second Crop
- $500 Director’s Club
- $2,500 President’s Club
- $50 First Crop
- $250 Bumper Crop
- $1,000 Dean’s Club
- $5,000 Sustainable Agriculture Club

Make checks payable to: **OSU Foundation–NWREC**

Mail to: North Willamette Research and Extension Center, 15210 NE Miley Road, Aurora, OR 97002

Membership forms for the **Friends of North Willamette Research and Extension Center** are also available by contacting the NWREC office at 503-678-1264 or downloading from the website at http://oregonstate.edu/dept/NWREC.

Contact Director, Mike Bondi, for more information or to discuss life or deferred gifts options.

Phone: 503-678-1264 • Fax: 503-678-5986 • E-mail: michael.bondi@oregonstate.edu • Cell. 503-705-2434
answers as needed while providing vision for the nursery industry.

The Farm: Share a little about the Hampton Roads Research Center, how big it is, what research and Extension is done there, and the staff you have to work with.

Jim: The approximately 110 acre Hampton Roads AREC is one of 12 research stations throughout the state. It was originally a truck crop station (vegetable) and now is focused on assisting the green industry, nursery and landscape. There are 5 faculty members who research plant sciences. The specific disciplines are Horticulture production, Entomology, Pathology, and Weed Science. The station is accompanied by demonstration gardens that include the All-America Trial Garden, Tidewater Arboretum, Utility Arboretum and number of theme gardens. Furthermore, we share facilities with the Virginia Tech Hampton Roads Center, which is an extended campus of Virginia Tech.

The Farm: Any final comments you’d like to share with our Friends of North Willamette?

Jim: I was sad to leave, however I look forward to seeing colleagues and growers in the Willamette Valley as I complete projects and begin new endeavors. Next time in Virginia Beach, please stop and visit the Hampton Roads AREC to see what nursery and landscape research and Extension activities are going on at the station.

Researchers Moves East from page 2

Blueberry Field Day

Bernadine Strik, Berry Research Leader at NWREC, discusses organic blueberry production at the annual field day on July 13. More than 100 attended the event.

Cane Berry Field Day

Joe DeFrancesco leads OSU’s Specialty Crop Registration program at NWREC and shares the latest pesticide information with about 60 growers at the Cane Berry Field Day on July 6.

Nursery Research Position on Hold

Many in the nursery industry have been asking about the refilling of Jim Owen’s Nursery Research faculty position at NWREC. The best we can say right now is the position is “on hold.”

There were plans to fill several vacant positions in Extension and the Agriculture Experiment Station following the approval of the state budget last summer. But, the Legislature held 3.5% of the originally budgeted dollars in July in case the state’s economy didn’t recover sufficiently. Those dollars have not been released. And, we are now told that additional reductions could be coming in 2012. Also, coming unbudgeted health care cost increases will mean very few dollars for new positions.

More information will be available after the Legislature meets in their winter session. We’ll keep you posted.

UAV Ready to Launch

This year’s Nursery Faire on September 14 featured Nursery Researcher, Heather Stoven, and Chal Landgren, Christmas Tree Specialist, as they prepared to launch an unmanned aerial vehicle they are evaluating for use in inventory management. OSU’s Media Specialist, Tiffany Woods, prepares to document the launch.
Annual Strawberry Field Day

One of the highlights at the annual NWREC berry field days is sampling the latest cultivars to see how they compare. Chad Finn, right, is a Berry Breeding Researcher with the USDA-ARS at OSU in Corvallis, and points out strawberry varieties for taste testing. Of course, vanilla ice cream is always provided when sampling berries.