

West Coast Hemp Industry-Oriented Project Funded with a \$10 Million USDA Grant will Benefit Washington State

Tacoma, WA-The Industrial Hemp Association of Washington is excited and proud to announce that researchers from Oregon State University and Washington State University are part of a new \$10 million grant that will study hemp and define economic opportunities in the western United States.

This game changing [grant](#), led by Oregon State University's Global Hemp Innovation Center, is a five-year project funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Sustainable Agricultural Systems program. [WSU](#) scientists are partnering with eight institutions across the nation and many industry partners, including the [Industrial Hemp Association of Washington](#), to address the needs of Native American and other rural community farmers and businesses in a four-state West Coast region.

“In the Fall of 2018, I sketched out the basic approach and justification of this project while parked at the south end of the US Hwy 97 crossing of the Columbia River between Oregon and Washington, recognizing the synergistic potentials for this new crop and its supply chain system along this transportation corridor, and the benefits to the adjacent rural and tribal economies from Mexico to Canada,” said Jay Noller, Founder and Director of the [Global Hemp Innovation Center](#), and Oregon's leader for hemp research since 2014.

Establishing a successful hemp industry requires research on where different hemp grain, fiber, and essential oil market classes could be optimally grown and the best genetics to use. The researchers will look at how to incorporate hemp into existing crop production systems to complement rather than disrupt markets, where to process the grown materials that are used to manufacture hemp products, and what are the likely growth markets to support industry expansion and community development.

The research team will address these questions by targeting the rural transportation corridor that traverses Washington, Oregon, Nevada and California east of the Cascade-Sierra Nevada Mountains from Canada to Mexico. The region represents diverse, generally arid environmental conditions, and encompasses both large areas of irrigated and non-irrigated production.

“We're interested in what hemp varieties are best for western growers across the region. Many of them are interested in growing the crop for fiber and grain,” said David Gang, professor in WSU's Institute of Biological Chemistry. “Hemp has a lot of amazing properties and potential, especially in producing building material and feedstock for manufacturing bio based products.”

Washington State has a strong agricultural and technical background that is ripe for hemp growth in the field and out. “Our hemp industry, rural communities, and tribes will benefit significantly from the research WSU will be doing on such a pivotal project. This will be a long-term collaboration that will continue to evolve and support the hemp industry in the state,” said Bonny Jo Peterson, Founder and IHEMPAWA Executive Director. “I am ecstatic to be involved as an industry partner in such a

forward-looking endeavor and to work with the Global Hemp Innovation Center, WSU, and other industry partners.”

Gang said, “The diverse environments in Washington State make it an ideal location to be a foundation for the regional hemp industry that this grant will help further develop.”

Native American Tribes are significantly represented across the four-state region. The researchers are incorporating Native American farmers and other tribal leaders, including the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation in Washington and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs in Oregon, in the effort with a goal to include their cultural and economic needs as part of their farming and business development efforts.

“The engagement of tribal communities also aims to address historic inequities in agriculture and will engage Native American students in different aspects of the emerging hemp sector. The up-front involvement of tribal communities along with other rural communities in this work is critical to its success. The potential economic opportunities this new commodity presents may provide tremendous potential for rural communities and our project has set out to ensure those opportunities are equally available and relevant to all kinds of farmers,” said Jeffrey Steiner, associate director of GHIC.

Steiner and over two dozen co-investigators spent six months and thousands of hours putting together the grant proposal that involves researchers, educators, and extension specialists from the four-state’s land grant universities, two federal research agencies, business developers, and over 30 industry technical advisors. There are more than half a dozen IHEMPAWA members involved in the project.

The IHEMPAWA is glad to be a partner in this industry-oriented project that will be instrumental in determining if, where, and how much hemp materials can be produced and where processing facilities could be located in the region.

The project should be able to determine the capacity for Washington and the other states to dependably supply hemp materials for manufacturing biobased products. “We consider not only linkages that need to be established between agricultural production and handling, processing, and utilization of materials but also the chicken-or-egg dilemma of how the needed financing can be raised to build out a new regional economy focused on hemp,” said Steiner.

Additional partners on the project include the USDA, Agricultural Research Service; United States Department of Transportation, Volpe National Transportation Systems Research Center, the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program; 7 Generations, a Native American-owned firm that specializes in Indian Country business development; USDA, National Agricultural Library; and the USDA, Western Rural Development Center.

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