

From the desk of the Prez...

I hope the new year has been treating you all well. I can tell you this mild winter has got me thinking we will be in store for a very busy spring and summer pest season! Many of us believe that if we are not planning for July and August in January and February, the busy season will fly right by before we are able to capitalize on it. With that said, we need quality people in the field to serve our customers and bring in the revenue. Each Spring there are a lot of new pest control and lawn care recruits who are being hired and trained to be ready for the busy season. Of course, they are required to pass their Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) exams so they can receive their licenses and get to work in their new career. This puts a lot of pressure on the limited resources and available space for testing at the most frequented testing location, the Natural Resources building in Olympia. In an effort to alleviate some of this pressure WSDA Pesticide Licensing Supervisor Christina Zimmerman has made arrangements with Red Lion Hotel in Olympia to offer an exam session for up to 150 testers on March 26th. If this process runs smoothly, they may offer more of these large-scale exam sessions in the months and years to come. Fingers crossed this is a successful experiment! At the time of this writing the Olympia testing location was booked out 3 weeks already, largely due to some licensees who did not have enough credits in their 5-year recertification cycle to renew their license without a retest.

WSDA is actively pursuing additional avenues to clean up some of our industry's frustrations with the state exam process, including amending the language in the legislative rules governing how our testing fees are collected and deposited, among other factors. Unfortunately, the way the rule is currently written is too restrictive for a more modern and common-sense approach. We at WSPMA are actively engaged with WSDA in the process to modernize the exam process with computer-based testing. There is only so much we can do though; the legislative process can move painfully slow sometimes. In the meantime, many of us have found the facilities at Lower Columbia College in Kelso/Longview to be a viable solution. This is the only location currently set up for computer-based testing, and provides immediate results on the screen as soon as the tester submits their final answer. The folks at WSDA are working on additional options all the time, but those processes take time. Personally, my company has sent two recruits to this LCC location and although it is about an hour south of Olympia, the process went very smooth both times and that location had exam room available several weeks before Olympia had any availability. As we have learned, they no longer accept walk-ins at the Natural Resources Building, so even if there is an empty seat, they will not fill it. This has to do with safety concerns. Speaking of that, there are new security measures in place at the Natural Resources Building. More information will follow but for now you should know that testers must now meet with WSDA staff in the rotunda area just outside of the parking elevators. From there they will sign in and wear a paper badge identifying them as a tester, and escorted to the testing room. More information will be coming but this was news to me so thought it would be good to pass along to you all.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Pacific Northwest Pest Management Conference in Hood River coming up 2/28 - 3/2. If you have not attended in the past, you should know it is a

great opportunity for learning, not only technical aspects of pest control, but also management training topics will be covered.

My mission this year as President of WSPMA is to actively engage with our current membership, and to discuss ways our association can be more beneficial to you. In my 12 years as a member I've learned that you get out what you put in. For my first 5 or 6 years in business I sat on the sideline, attended some classes here and there, spoke with some friendly faces, but that was about it. Once I started attending the Leavenworth and Hood River conferences, I began to become more familiar with all the regular attendees, struck up conversations when I could, and eventually realized that everybody in our Association is genuinely interested in our overall success as an industry. That means we are cheering for each other to do well! A rising tide lifts all boats. Yes, we are all competitors, but healthy competition does nothing but bring up the overall performance and professionalism of our group. Feel free to drop me a line anytime to discuss business, pests, association practices, whatever is on your mind. I'm here to serve you and I plan to do that to the best of my ability. Here's to a pest-filled and profitable 2019!

Luke Rambo
lukerambo@rambopest.com