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New Director Matt Baur Brings Experience and an Inclusive Vision to the Western IPM Center

After leading the Western Integrated Pest Management Center through the global COVID crisis as acting director, Matt Baur has been named permanent director to lead the Center into the post-pandemic future.

Baur, an IPM practitioner and entomologist by training, had been the Western IPM Center's associate director since 2014.

"Like everyone, the Center had to change the way we worked during the pandemic and some of those changes are likely to continue into our future," Baur predicted. "The region we serve in the West is huge – Guam to Colorado, Alaska to New Mexico – and the remote technologies and virtual platforms we all became familiar with in 2020 can help us connect across those miles."

Baur's goals for the Center are to build on its successes and expand its outreach to serve new areas and audiences, promoting smart, safe and sustainable pest management across the region to protect the people, environment and economy of the American West.

"The vision of the Center is "A healthier West with fewer pests," he explained, "and that's something I care about deeply. I have two sons and promoting integrated pest management is one way I help protect their world."

Baur, who officially began as director on July 1, sees a need to begin reconnecting with the people who research and teach IPM, and plans to attend meetings and conferences for all the scientific disciplines involved in pest management. He also plans to expand the Center's connections to communities that have been under-represented and under-served in the past.

"I believe it's vital that we not only listen to but represent all the stakeholders in the West affected by pests and pest-management practices," Baur said. "There are voices we haven't heard and communities we haven't served well in the past, and I am very happy to have the opportunity to change that. Integrated pest management can be a way to promote environmental and social justice, and as a Regional IPM Center, we can be leaders in that."

The Western Integrated Pest Management Center is one of four regional centers funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture to promote smarter, safer and more sustainable pest management through the use of integrated approaches and tactics. IPM, as that science is known, is vital to controlling pest in agriculture but is also used to manage pests in natural areas like rangeland and forests, in homes and schools and anywhere else pest are a problem.

Before joining the Western IPM Center Baur worked as a research scientist at DuPont/Pioneer and was a research assistant professor at Louisiana State University. He received his doctorate in entomology at the University of Kentucky, Lexington and his bachelor's degree in biology from the University of California, San Diego. He's a licensed pest control advisor in the state of California.

30