Q&A WITH NEW MARKET ACCESS AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM AREA DIRECTOR

Jess Paulson is ODA’s new Market Access and Certification Program Area Director—responsible for addressing the development, promotion, and marketing needs of Oregon’s agricultural industries. Jess comes to ODA from the USDA Foreign Agr Service, where he served 3 years in Turkey and most recently, 4 years in Japan. After years of overseas work, what brings him back to Oregon?

Q. You grew up in Oregon. What is it like to be back?

A. I’m an Oregon kid. I went to Parkrose High School then the University of Oregon, studied political science and international studies with a minor in Japanese. After graduation I moved to Washington D.C. and have spent the last 20 years away. I didn’t ever want to be away for as long as I was. Applying for this job was not the first time I looked at moving back to Oregon, but it was the first to fit so well, professionally and personally. Almost everyone asks why I would move back. I say, because it’s Oregon and nothing compares to living here! Not to mention being closer to my mom Debbie. And while she’s happy to have me back, her real excitement is having her grandchildren close.

Q. You have lived overseas and worked in agriculture, how does the world see the United States?

A. Most of the world sees U.S. agriculture as large and industrial. It can be hard to convince people that while large, most farms are still family-run. Some of my best conversations stemmed from pictures of American farmers in the setting of a large open space that they manage on their own. Otherwise, the world sees us as an opportunity or a threat. Everyone wants to send their products to the States. Many are also concerned that their producers won’t be able to compete, displacing their products in the market. For example, China’s arable land represents 8.8 percent of the total arable land in the world, yet it supports over 20 percent of the world’s population. The U.S. has more arable land and 1 billion less people than China. I like to focus on the differences, and how having both makes everyone better off.

Q. What were the differences you experienced between working in Turkey and Japan?

A. While both countries are big on relationships, Turkey is creative in finding ways to make business happen. Japan, on the other hand, is all about following the rules. So, one faces very different business challenges in each country. Turkey is more flexible, but also less predictable. Japan is very predictable, but also quite rigid. I had to approach challenges in ways that work with each of those styles.

Q. What are your goals for the future of the Market Access and Certification Program?

A. I have to get away from talking about Japan. No really, I’m still learning about the programs, how they operate and interact with the industry. I know our team will be looking at all the opportunities in all the markets and evaluating what works best considering the logistics and demands for Oregon products. We want to increase market access, establish good data sources to better evaluate the distribution of Oregon products, and then establish recognition of our products and prices.

Q. What do you think about current trade conditions?

A. Trade is no less important today than it ever has been. It is all the more important for producers and food manufacturers and food developers to understand what is happening in the foreign markets. We will have to explore any new opportunities that have risen because of the trade friction we see today.

Q. What will you miss most about Tokyo?

A. My favorite food Tan Tan Men, a Japanese version of Chinese Ramen from the Szechuan province. It’s excessive in the use of sesame oil and sesame paste but there is nothing like it! Of course, I will miss friends and family, my wife is from Japan. I will also miss interacting with industry members and ministry officials, but agriculture is a small world. One of the best parts of this new job is that I get to reconnect with my old colleagues through my trade work.

Jess will primarily work in ODA’s Portland office co-located with Oregon State University’s Food Innovation Center. Upcoming trade work includes travel to Vietnam, Japan, and Korea.
ODA PROGRAM DIRECTOR ATTENDS the 100TH WESTERN PLANT BOARD MEETING and WITNESSES DISNEYLAND MAGIC

One hundred years ago, plant protection officials from 11 states met in San Diego to hold the first Western Plant Board meeting to develop uniformity in conducting plant protection work. Despite the challenges of life after war and the Spanish flu pandemic, plus transportation issues, officials gathered in Southern California to focus on protecting their home regions from invasive plant pests. Work that continues today.

As president of the Western Plant Board, ODA’s Plant Protection and Conservation Program Area Director Helmuth Rogg ushered in the centennial meeting, also in San Diego.

Topics of discussion included opportunities and challenges of western agriculture, trade, plant protection, and global climate change. States shared similar themes of concern including the challenges of uncertain federal trade policies, funding for plant protection efforts, and rising temperatures resulting in more invasive plant species detections.

“On (May 15), we toured several agricultural sites north of San Diego, including a cut flower and agriculture tourism farm in Carlsbad, a hydroponic lettuce plant, and two other flower producing nurseries. During this trip, I learned about the diverse agriculture crops, pest issues, and different methods of sanitization and treating for pests,” said Jake Bodart, ODA’s new Insect Pest Prevention and Management Program manager. “On (May 16), we ended the meeting with a joint session of all participants attending the three concurrent meetings, the Western Plant Board, the regional CAPS (Cooperative Agriculture Pest Survey), and the Western Horticultural Inspection Society meetings addressing issues that impact all of our work.”

In the early morning hours of May 17, the group traveled to the Los Angeles produce and flower market as part of the board meeting tours. Visiting some of the largest markets in North America, the group observed the work of county inspectors. Commodities included olives, tomatoes, and coffee beans as well as a variety of domestic and exotic flowers.

The group also made a special trip to Disneyland, arriving around 4 a.m. John Kabashima, an emeritus professor with UC Davis and a consultant for Disneyland in plant protection, organized a behind-the-scenes tour of the park. The theme park has nearly 20,000 trees, 125,000 shrubs, 500 hanging baskets and nearly 1 million annuals planted each year. The Mickey Mouse portrait at the Disneyland entrance is planted nine times a year and features 3,600 annuals in the face and 6,400 on the sides, for a total of about 90,000 plants per year.

Some of the plant issues at the park include shot hole borers, cactus mealybugs, olive borers, and insufficient nutrient supply. The Disneyland plant protection team, like all other behind-the-scenes maintenance folks, can only work between 2 a.m. and 7 a.m., fixing issues in the park. Then the crew has to leave to avoid interfering with the magic of Disneyland for the thousands that visit daily.

The next Western Plant Board will be held in Oregon in May of 2020.

SHARE THE ROAD
by ANDREA CANTU-SCHOMUS

Willamette Valley farmer Scott Miller was driving his tractor in 2014 on a rural country road and was killed after being rear-ended by someone who was driving too fast. Miller was just 53 years old. Farmer Molly McCargar gets emotional when speaking about her friend and fellow farmer. During a joint press conference, June 20 at her farm in Gervais, McCargar urged drivers to slow down, and asked fellow farmers to make sure their flashing lights are working and their orange reflective decals are on display.

“At the end of the day, I want to be able to return home to my family, I would like our employees to be able to return home to their families,” said McCargar. Our rural roads are no longer being used just for getting agricultural products to market. They’re now being used as back road commuting highways.”

In 2017, there were 42 crashes in Oregon involving tractors or farm equipment, up from 26 in 2013, according to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). The dangerous trend prompted representatives from the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Farm Bureau and Marion County Sheriff’s Office to join the effort to help save lives.

“Farming is one of the nation’s most dangerous jobs,” said ODA Director Alexis Taylor. “We want to remind drivers to slow down, be patient, and use caution when encountering a tractor on the road.”

McCargar and fellow farmer Brenda Frketic worked to pass House Bill 3213 that directs ODOT to create a pilot program that will allow up to five counties to participate, selecting safety corridors between two and ten miles long. The bill passed both the House and Senate unanimously and is awaiting a signature from the Governor.

Find rural road driving safety tips for both farmers and drivers on the back page of this issue.
ODA EMPLOYEES BURNISH LEADERSHIP SKILLS

by ANDY ZIMMERMAN

What does talking with Alaskans who rely on hunting and fishing to survive, participating in a challenge course at Camp Tilikum, and touring agricultural areas throughout Oregon have in common? Each is a facet of programs focused on leadership in government, and the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) has participants in all of them. Investing in employees, broadening their skills, and supporting opportunities to build knowledgeable and experienced leaders in natural resources is part of ODA’s strategic plan.

Steve Harrington, manager of the Weights and Measures Program, and Elizabeth Savory, manager of the Plant Health Program, participated in the Executive Seminar Program for Natural Resources through Portland State University. Coursework included three week-long case study trips to Anchorage, Alaska; Port Townsend, Washington; and the Eastern Oregon community of Enterprise. The final two-day session will be in Portland, where participants will present to the program’s advisory board.

“This year’s program was oriented around rural agriculture and making life work in the rural west,” Savory said. “We spent a week digging deep into three different natural resource problems related to rural living, hearing from many viewpoints, from the producers to processors, the policy makers, the regulators, and the tribes involved.

“That’s the cool thing about everywhere we went, you might have heard one person’s point of view and been on their side, and 20 minutes later, someone from the opposing group tells their version of the story. You really start to understand that there’s never a clear black-and-white answer to these types of problems and each require a lot of cooperation, collaboration, and different kinds of leadership skills to resolve them.”

Each year, the program explores a different natural resource issue to help participants better understand policy and governance challenges. The course includes class readings, lectures and interaction with guest speakers for each case study as well as leadership learning plan development, Savory said.

Publications and Web Coordinator Liz Beesle, and Pesticide Registration and Certification Specialist Gilbert Uribe participated in Resource Education & Agricultural Leadership (REAL) Oregon. The pair were part of a group that spent time throughout the state focusing on local agriculture, forestry, and natural resource issues. The course was five multi-day sessions spread over five months. Topics in REAL Oregon included learning about the economic impact of the Port of Morrow on the state while in Boardman, understanding different aspects and management objectives relating to the forestry industry in Roseburg, hearing about coastal issues and the fishing industry in Newport, and watching the political system at work during legislative session in Salem.

“There were 30 participants in the program from a variety of professions all across the state, all relating to natural resources,” Uribe said. “Each session consisted of presentations from individuals or representatives of local industries and organizations, and tours. We were also assigned to small groups and assigned a public policy topic, along with a specific point of view to defend for that topic. These assignments helped us work on our public speaking skills and forced us to look at issues from angles and points of view we normally would not have taken or considered.”

Another program with ODA involvement is Leadership Oregon. This 12-month program, created in 1989, has included several ODA employees, including ODA Deputy Director Lisa Hanson. This year’s participant is Isak Stapleton, director of the Food Safety Program.

“I felt it was important to go through the Leadership Oregon course to get a broader overall sense for leadership structure and build up some leadership skills I already had for this position,” Stapleton said.

Leadership Oregon’s program includes topics such as mentoring and developing people, intentional engagement, and equity and communication, plus a team-building exercise at Camp Tilikum. Participants in Leadership Oregon meet for two days each month.

“A lot of it has really been around leadership skills building, and doing a lot of assessments of your abilities,” Stapleton said. “And going forward with how best you fit, what are your skills, and what are some tools you can use with your own team to build more cohesion, a better unit.”

Natural Resources Program Area Director Stephanie Page participated in Leadership Oregon in 2012 while she was an ag water quality specialist. She now serves as a mentor with the program.

“The curriculum was really beneficial but then the chance to interact with other folks from other state agencies, it was good networking,” Page said. “It also helped illustrate how we each think our agencies are so unique but actually a lot of agencies have very similar challenges. We all have a lot that we can learn from how other agencies do things.”

ODA ENCOURAGES PARTICIPATION in OFF-ROAD DIESEL INVENTORY

Over the last three years the Oregon legislature has considered adopting California’s diesel emission standards for non-road engines. This would eventually result in non-road engines made before 2007 becoming obsolete.

As part of a compromise, the state authorized funding for a survey of non-road diesel engine use, and hired Eastern Research Group (ERG) to collect data on equipment population, engine age, hours of use, and other factors in order to estimate accurate emissions levels for the state. ERG will be contacting farmers over the next 2-3 months for participation in a voluntary survey of non-road diesel equipment used in Oregon for agricultural purposes in 2017. The goal of the project is to develop more accurate emissions estimates for Oregon as an alternative to the “default” emissions estimates developed by the U.S. EPA. The survey is also available online at: https://ODA.FY1/ERG
RURAL ROAD SAFETY TIPS

Safety tips for drivers:
• If you decide to pass farm equipment on the road, please do so with caution. Be watchful of vehicles behind you that may also try to pass.
• If you must enter the oncoming lane of traffic, do not proceed unless you can see clearly ahead of both your vehicle and the vehicle you will pass. If there are any curves or hills ahead that may block your view or the view of oncoming vehicles, do not pass.
• Do not pass if you are in a designated “No Passing Zone” or within 100 feet of any intersection, railroad grade crossing, bridge, elevation structure, or tunnel.
• Do not assume that a farm vehicle that pulls to the right side of the road is going to turn right or is letting you pass. Due to the size of some farm implements, the farmer must make wide left-hand turns. If you are unsure, check the operator’s hand signals and look at the left side of the road for gates, driveways, or a place the vehicle might turn.

Safety tips for farmers:
• Oregon law requires a slow-moving vehicle reflector on any machine that travels the road slower than 25 mph. Always point the triangle up, keep the SMV emblem clean to maximize reflectivity, and replace the emblem when it fades, normally every two to three years.
• Mark the edges of tractors and machines with reflective tape and reflectors. Consider installing retrofit lighting to increase visibility.
• Turn on your lights, but turn off rear spotlights when going onto the road. From a distance, spotlights can be mistaken for headlights.
• Be aware of heavy traffic patterns.
• Consider installing mirrors on equipment so you can see motorists around you. Be careful where the mirrors are placed.
• When moving multiple farm implements down the highway, leave enough space between each vehicle for cars to pass.