The COVID-19 pandemic has turned all of our lives upside down and my thoughts are with everyone as we navigate these unprecedented times. While the Oregon Department of Agriculture’s (ODA) offices remain closed to the public (except by appointment) our staff continue to be very active with the agricultural industry and community. Our mission to ensure healthy natural resources, environment, and economy for Oregonians today and in the future remains at the forefront of everything we do.

As the COVID-19 pandemic began sweeping across the globe, U.S. Homeland Security and the state deemed agriculture a critical industry. That meant agriculture had to quickly make adjustments at every step along the supply chain to protect employees and consumers, while still providing services, food, and feed. In Oregon, the COVID-19 emergency caused Oregon’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OR-OSHA) to issue temporary rules requiring increased field sanitation measures and more stringent labor housing and transportation regulations. These precautionary measures had to happen quickly and for many there was little time or resources available to make adjustments. I am proud that the state acted swiftly to identify funding and create one-of-a-kind programs to help farmers keep farming, fishers fishing, ranchers ranching, and food processors continuing to operate.

### FOOD SECURITY AND FARMWORKER SAFETY PROGRAM

In an effort to help alleviate some of the additional burdens for farmers and to protect our food supply and our agricultural workers, Governor Kate Brown dedicated $30 million in federal funds to administer the Food Security and Farmworker Safety Program. ODA, together with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and Oregon Housing and Community Services, created the program using information from the agricultural community. The program kicked off in late May with a statewide personal protective equipment (PPE) distribution event with help from Oregon State University Extension system and the Oregon National Guard.

- $14 million for mitigation of COVID-19 outbreaks
- Providing farmworkers with PPE
- Community-based outreach and prevention communication
- Farmworker quarantine relief fund
- $16 million to comply with Oregon OSHA’s temporary rules for housing, field sanitation and transportation
- $10 million to support additional employer-provided housing
- $5 million for additional required field sanitation units
- $1 million for transportation assistance

For information and to apply for assistance please visit the Food Safety & Farmworker Safety website: oda.direct/FSFS

### PLAYBOOK AND TOOLKIT FOR FOOD PROCESSORS AND FARMS

The playbook and toolkit are resources meant to provide guidance to state agencies, agricultural operators, and workers when one or more cases of COVID-19 are associated with a workplace. This coordinated strategy created by OR-OSHA and the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) includes both a preventions guideline toolkit as well as response efforts for state agencies that will be used to support this critical industry. The goal of using these guides is to provide a consistent state response and ensure everyone involved knows what to expect when one or more cases of COVID-19 are detected in the workplace.

### #EATOREGONSEAFOOD

ODA, the Oregon seafood industry, and Oregon Sea Grant launched the #EatOregonSeafood initiative in mid-June to encourage Oregonians and Washingtonians to buy and prepare Oregon seafood at home amid the pandemic. Restaurant closures due to COVID-19 resulted in reduced commercial demand meaning Oregon’s seafood industry saw a sharp decrease in seafood sales. #EatOregonSeafood is an opportunity to support regional fishing families and seafood processors and preserve the industry. Please read more on how you can find Oregon seafood on page 3.

### OREGON FARMERS MARKETS ASSOCIATION

COVID-19 hit Oregon’s farmers markets just as they were gearing up for the season. To help increase opportunities for buying local food, the Oregon Farmers Markets Association (OFMA), in partnership with ODA and the Oregon Coast Visitors Association (OCVA), launched a new statewide project this spring—aimed at helping Oregon’s farmers markets establish online ordering systems. Please read more about this exciting work on page 2.

Despite all our efforts I am aware that there are many who will suffer losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Again, my thoughts are with you. I can assure you, ODA will continue to be very active in supporting our agricultural community, ODA customers and ensuring the voice of Oregon agriculture is heard.

Sincerely,
**CHANGES on the BOARD of AGRICULTURE**

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) would like to sincerely thank Pete Brentano and Sharon Livingston for their eight years of honorable service to the Oregon State Board of Agriculture. Both members will end their second and final term in mid-August.

“Pete and Sharon are both exceptional leaders and it has been a privilege to work with them over the years,” said ODA, Director Alexis Taylor. “Their on-farm experience, guidance, diverse perspectives and sense of humor will be greatly missed.”

Pete Brentano is a fifth-generation farmer, who manages his family’s nursery in St. Paul. The farm has experienced many changes over the years, starting with growing row crops in the late 50’s, then wheat and finally nursery. Brentano’s Tree Farm LLC sells to landscapers, wholesalers, garden centers and nursery brokers. He is a graduate of Oregon State University and a proud husband and father of two.

Sharon Livingston is a lifelong advocate of the agricultural community. Her family history extends back for a hundred years of farming in Grant County. She and her husband established their own ranch in Long Creek in 1966. Over the years she has served on the Oregon Beef Council, the Oregon Cattleman’s Association and received Oregon Aglink’s 2016 Agriculturalist of the Year Award.

The Governor is responsible for appointing all Board of Agriculture members. Applications for the two open positions for persons actively engaged in the production of an agricultural commodity will be accepted through July 17, 2020. To apply you must complete an interest form and include supplemental information such as a resume, statement of interest and short bio.

The Oregon State Board of Agriculture is a 10-member board that advises the Oregon Department of Agriculture on policy issues, develops recommendations on key agricultural issues and provides advocacy of the state’s agriculture industry in general.

**OREGON FARMERS MARKETS MOVE ONLINE** by MELISSA MATTHEWSON

COVID-19 hit Oregon in the beginning of the spring, just as farmers markets were gearing up for the season. This brought significant challenges for markets in serving both their communities and vendors. Although farmers markets were (and still are) considered “essential businesses,” they were looking at a drastic reduction in shoppers and sales, likely hurting vendor businesses and impacting the market’s long-term viability. In response, many farmers markets rapidly shifted their operations to make shopping safer, by spacing out vendor booths, enforcing social distancing, increasing food safety practices—and by including online shopping options for customers in many cases. This gives local food lovers a chance to buy from area farmers through a lower-contact method.

With the support of the Oregon Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and the Oregon Coast Visitors Association, the Oregon Farmers Market Association (OFMA) was able to bring on a new staff member to support the online farmers market project as well as provide assistance to markets operating under social distancing protocols. Because of this special funding, OFMA can continue to support the farmers markets by providing continued technical assistance, facilitating market peer learning, and acting as a hub for COVID-19 resources.

Twenty-seven farmers markets are currently operating online ordering systems. Shopping for local products online is not unlike other online shopping experiences: local food shoppers choose vendor products, check-out with a shopping cart, pay online, and pick-up at the market’s designated time each week. Some markets are even aggregating products for customers while others allow direct pick-up from vendors. Each online market offers a variety of products as well as convenient distribution systems including drive-through or pick-up options. For example, the Florence Farmers Market, which serves a community with many retirees, is operating a drive-through only market for customers. Online ordering systems are an excellent option for vulnerable or at-risk populations. In addition, SNAP and EBT customers can continue to use their benefits at select online markets.

For more information, visit: www.oregonfarmersmarkets.org

**TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL CHANNEL DRAINAGE MAINTENANCE**

The 2019 Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 2437. This bill directs the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to develop a new program for allowing the maintenance of certain streams and ditches that provide drainage of agricultural lands. The bill included a set of fifteen required conditions to protect fish and wildlife habitat and ecological functions.

Leading this effort for ODA is Marganne Allen, Mike Powers, and Tyler Manitsas from the Agricultural Water Quality Program. They have been working with staff from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Department of State Lands (DSL) to develop the Oregon Administrative Rules to begin this new program. The draft rules for this new program are currently open for public comment. The public comment period has been extended until July 30, 2020 at 5:00 PM. A copy of the draft rules, as well as additional information, may be found online at: oda.direct/AgChannelMaintenance

Once the administrative rules are complete, Oregon producers will have access to a notice-based system to perform drainage maintenance in ditches and streams that meet the following features: the channel must have been maintained for agricultural drainage sometime in the past (i.e. streams that have not been modified or channelized do not qualify); the channel has been serviceable for agricultural drainage at some point within the past five years; and the channel cannot be identified as an essential salmon habitat. All maintenance work must be done while the channel is dry and during a time period defined by ODFW.

Contact: Mike Powers (503) 986-4761, mpowers@oda.state.or.us; and Tyler Manitsas (503) 986-4715 or tmanitsas@oda.state.or.us
CLOPYRALID in SOIL INVESTIGATION
by ANDY ZIMMERMAN

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has received reports about growth deformities in plants from gardeners using purchased soil, and investigators are working to determine how the treated material was introduced into the soil or compost.

On May 15, a concern was received about purchased garden soil possibly contaminated with pesticides. By June 24, more than 50 people requested information from ODA.

Samples have been collected for pesticide testing from some of the affected customers. Laboratory soil analysis from the customers’ samples confirmed the presence of clopyralid, an herbicide used to control broadleaf weeds such as dandelions, clover and thistle. The agency also met with product distributors and collected samples from their facilities.

“We currently have two investigators looking into this matter,” said Toby Primbs, ODA’s Pesticide Enforcement Program Manager. “We have had a lot of contacts from concerned citizens with questions for the Department, and out of our 10 investigators, we have three involved with this topic, plus our lead investigator, citizen advocate, (Natural Resources Program Area) director Stephanie (Page), and myself all helping with calls and emails.”

The Pesticides Program is working with Dean Innovations and McFarlane’s to identify the source of contamination. Additional companies may be involved. In addition, the Fertilizer Program is working “with Dean Innovations to evaluate their supply chain and custody of component products they purchase or blend. We are also reviewing the product labels of any soil or compost product Dean Innovations or McFarlane’s sells to meet Fertilizer Program registration requirements with ODA,” said Wym Matthews, ODA’s Fertilizer Program Manager.

“The companies should not have received any material treated with clopyralid, and both have been very cooperative with ODA in trying to find how this issue arose,” Primbs said. “ODA Pesticides Program is now working with both companies to help look into their source materials for the why and how.”

In 2003, ODA issued rules prohibiting uses outside of limited specific sites because clopyralid is known to remain in compost. Where clopyralid is allowed to be used, grass clippings and other material from a treated site are not allowed for use in compost.

ODA created a frequently asked questions document to provide information to residents, which includes options to help determine whether the soil is contaminated, and if it is, the options available for disposal. It also provides information about clopyralid. It can be found at: https://oda.direct/SoilFAQ.

ODA also issued an advisory to pesticide product dealers and pesticide applicators. It has been shared with other organizations and programs to increase awareness about this issue.

The Pesticides Program has been conducting annual education campaigns about other pesticide-related issues, such as preventing pesticide drift, and this is another issue the agency thinks would benefit from an outreach campaign, Primbs said.

ODA will provide updates on its website at: oda.direct/PesticidesCurrentIssues. If you have questions, email: contaminatedsoilquestions@oda.state.or.us

#EATOREGONSEAFOOD
by THERESA YOSHIOKA

The Oregon Department of Agriculture, the Oregon seafood industry, and Oregon Sea Grant have launched the #EatOregonSeafood initiative to encourage Oregonians and Washingtonians to purchase and prepare Oregon seafood at home. Due to restaurant closures worldwide amid COVID-19 and resulting reduced commercial demand, Oregon’s seafood industry saw a sharp decrease in seafood sales beginning in March. This initiative is an opportunity to support regional fishing families and seafood processors and preserve the industry that delivers fresh, locally caught seafood that is celebrated in the Pacific Northwest.

The key focus of the initiative is to educate consumers about how to prepare seafood at home and where to purchase Oregon seafood. To reach consumers, ODA launched a public relations and social media effort to get the word out about Oregon seafood and asking leading chefs and food influencers to share pantry-friendly recipes on social media using the hashtag #EatOregonSeafood.

Additionally, ODA and OSU partnered to launch the Eat Oregon Seafood webpage (www.eatoregonseafood.org) that lists places to buy Oregon seafood, provides seafood information, and will soon include recipes.

The initiative kicked off with a press release and an appearance on KOIN’s Foodie Friday with Chef Jeff Graham of Fort George Brewery and a black cod ceviche dish. Chef Philippe Boulot, executive chef at the Portland MAC and Oregon Beef Council public member, shared fabulous Oregon seafood recipes across his social media platforms. Two leading chefs in Portland, Chef Gabriel Rucker, owner of Le Pigeon, and Chef Cathy Whims of Nostrana, not only posted seafood dishes on Instagram, but also featured Oregon seafood in their take-out menu that same week. Watch for new Oregon seafood dishes to be posted with the hashtag #EatOregonSeafood each week through the end of August.

The call also went out to the fishing families of Oregon to share their stories and recipes on social media using the hashtag. Check out some of their posts, which are usually under the name of their fishing boat (F/V or Fishing Vessel).

This initiative is a collaboration of the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission, Oregon Albacore Commission, Oregon Trawl Commission, Oregon Salmon Commission, Oregon State University Extension Service, Oregon Sea Grant, Positively Groundfish and the Oregon Department of Agriculture. We are excited to partner with industry to mitigate the damaging impact of COVID-19 on Oregon’s seafood industry now, and to hopefully make it more resilient in the future, with increased sales through retail and online channels.
ODA RETIREMENTS

Longtime Oregon Department of Agriculture employees Gary McAnich and Randy Black retired June 30. With a combined nearly 56 years of experience they will be truly missed for their hard work, dedication, and years of knowledge.

Gary McAnich came to ODA more than 20 years ago. Most recently he managed ODA’s Nursery Program that includes Christmas trees and Hemp. His staff works to ensure products are not spreading dangerous pests or diseases, such as sudden oak death. While he has experienced many changes in the industry over the years, he says he will miss working with Oregon’s smart and innovative growers. Those who know Gary best says he will always be remembered as a kind, hardworking, and friendly person.

Randy Black retired after serving the state of Oregon for 36 years. Most recently Randy worked as a Hemp Specialist. He was one of the first employees of Oregon’s Hemp Program, transferring from his duties in Market Access and Certification. He will be missed for his optimism, enthusiasm and willingness to answer questions. This made him a perfect fit in the Hemp Program as it launched and welcomed new growers and handlers.

“To lose them both at the same time is a big loss to our program both professionally and personally,” said Helmuth Rogg, director of Plant Programs. “It is hard to imagine our workplace without them. To say they will be missed seems like such an understatement. I sincerely hope retirement is wonderful for both of these great men.”

Congratulations to Gary and Randy on their retirement!