

THE AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY

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New Oregon State Board of Agriculture Members

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has appointed two new members to the State Board of Agriculture. The appointments for Miguel Lopez, owner of Red Dirt Vineyard Management Company from Carlton, and Eric Orem owner/operator of a diversified dryland wheat, hay, and cattle farming operation in Heppner, are effective immediately. Each will serve a four-year term with an option to reapply for a second term.

Lopez will fill the board's public member position formerly occupied by Stephanie Hallock of Lake Oswego. Orem will fill a producer position, formerly occupied by Tyson Raymond of Helix. Both Hallock and Raymond served two four-year terms. I sincerely thank Stephanie and Tyson for their service and welcome Miguel and Eric to the board.

Miguel Lopez brings a lifetime of experience on the farm, growing up as a child of farmworkers, later a farm laborer himself and now as an agriculture business owner. While most of Miguel's experience is in the vineyard and winemaking, he is committed to creating connections with other industries to learn and help grow Oregon agriculture.



Miguel Lopez

Eric Orem, a first-generation farmer-rancher has a genuine passion for public service and giving back to his fellow producers and his community.

Lopez was born and raised in Oregon and is building an impressive career in the state's wine industry. He started in the vineyard, working alongside his father who was a vineyard manager. After graduating from high school, he earned a full-time job at a vineyard and earned a scholarship to attend the Chemeketa Eola Northwest Viticulture Center. There he earned an associate degree in winemaking. After several years of winemaking at several Willamette Valley vineyards, Lopez moved into management and sales. In 2017, Lopez and his sister formed Red Dirt Vineyard Management Company. The business provides vineyard consultation from design to installation, promotion, budget development, spray program management and winemaking expertise from vineyard to bottle.



Eric Orem

Orem grew up in Morrow County and earned an associate degree in Marketing and Business Management from Blue Mountain Community College. He is a first-generation farmer. In 2001, he began leasing a 2,400 acre dryland

wheat farm from a farmer he worked for in high school. Since then, he has grown his farm to 7,000 acres. Orem converted all acres to direct seed, no-till practices to conserve the topsoil and uses GPS and other technologies to reduce overlap of fertilizers and chemical treatments. He runs a 120 cow and calf operation, grows hay, and provides custom seeding and spraying.

The Governor is responsible for appointing all Board of Agriculture members. The Oregon State Board of Agriculture is a 12-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.

Learn more online at <https://oda.direct/BOA>

Sincerely,

Alexis M. Taylor



PROTECTING OREGON'S AGRICULTURAL LANDS *for the FUTURE*

The Oregon State Board of Agriculture recently expressed an interest in learning more about work to protect Oregon's farms and ranches. While the state's iconic land use planning program has arguably been very successful in constraining urban growth and conserving our state's farm and forest land, challenges still exist. According to the USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture, 340,000 acres fell out of agricultural production in Oregon from 2012 to 2017. Since 1997 the state has lost nearly 10 percent of its farmland.

Chad Allen, a board member, Tillamook County dairy farmer and member of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) helped lead the conversation and introduce members of the Oregon Agricultural Trust (OAT) and the Black Oregon Land Trust (BOLT), two of many organizations working to protect Oregon's agricultural lands.

The State Legislature established the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) in 2017 to help address the challenges of fragmented farmland, conversion of farmland to non-farm uses, complex regulations, and planning for generational transfers. The program provides voluntary incentives to farmers and ranchers to support practices that maintain or enhance both agricultural and natural resources such as fish and wildlife on agricultural lands. OAHP was developed by a collaborative of organizations representing natural resource conservations and agriculture, including farmer and rancher representatives.

OAT, a nonprofit land trust also partners with farmers and ranchers to protect agricultural land, detailed the difficulty of passing ag land to the next generation during the December State Board of Agriculture meeting. Nellie McAdams, of OAT says, agriculture land loss may accelerate



during a wave of intergenerational transfers; the average age of Oregon farmers and ranchers is 60, yet 81% lack a succession plan, and many do not have successors (The Future of Oregon's Agricultural Land). McAdams added, that when a farmer doesn't have an estate plan, their land is much more likely to be sold, fragmented, and developed—destabilizing the very foundation of agriculture. OAT will begin implementing its strategic conservation plan in 2022 and launch an education program. For more information about OAT please call 541-213-4749 or email Marc Hudson at marc@oregonagtrust.org.

Shantae Johnson, president of BOLT and a member of the Board provided an update on BOLT's capital campaign to raise \$1 million to acquire land within the trust. The land will support the nonprofit's mission of securing land stewardship opportunities for Black farmers and communities. A fundraising dinner is scheduled for February and research is ongoing to determine the property or properties that best fit BOLT's needs. Johnson says the group is also working with OR Black Pioneers, Oregon State University and NAACP to create a strategic plan. To connect with BOLT please email at blackoregonland@gmail.com.

Agricultural lands in Oregon face diverse threats and protecting farm and ranch land is critical to a host of economic, environmental, and socio-cultural benefits. If farmers and ranchers are thinking of protecting land are interested in getting involved, donating time or resources or volunteering there are several organizations in addition to OAT and BOLT doing this work. Some organizations include:

- American Farmland Trust – <https://farmland.org>
- Black Oregon Land Trust (BOLT) – <https://www.facebook.com/blackoregonlandtrust/>
- Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) – <https://oregonlandtrusts.org/oahp/>
- Oregon Agricultural Trust (OAT) – www.oregonagtrust.org
- Oregon Sustainable Agricultural Land Trust (OSALT) – <http://www.osalt.org>
- USDA NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – <https://oda.fyi/ACEP>

SB 892 Oregon Disaster Assistance Program

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) is receiving many emails and phone calls about Senate Bill 892, the new disaster assistance program passed by Oregon Legislators during the second special session on Dec. 14. For updates and news about the new program, ODA is asking the public to please subscribe to the disaster assistance program listserv at <https://oda.fyi/DAP>. ODA is working as quickly as possible to develop and implement the program by early 2022.

Senate Bill 892 directs ODA to establish a \$40 million assistance program to help mitigate economic losses farmers and ranchers sustained because of the natural disasters in 2021, including the ice storm in February, the heat dome event in July and the ongoing drought statewide. The disaster assistance program was one element of the nearly \$100 million drought package that was funded during the one-day special session.

The Legislature designed the loan program to act as a bridge loan or direct assistance while a federal program is developed and announced by the USDA. The \$40 million package includes nearly \$4 million in administration costs and nearly \$36 million in forgivable loans to Oregon farmers and ranchers who qualify. Details including eligibility criteria, the application process, and implementation of this program have yet to be determined. The legislature also provided four new positions to implement the program and provide relief to producers in timely manner.

Find a fact sheet online with more information at <https://oda.direct/ODAPFactSheet>. Again, to receive email updates on the progress of the disaster assistance program please subscribe to the disaster assistance program listserv at <https://oda.fyi/DAP>. ODA thanks you for your patience.



Isaak Stapleton to lead NRPA



Isaak Stapleton

Isaak Stapleton spent five years as a pesticide investigator in the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Program Area (NRPA).

Three years later, he's back as program area director.

"Being back in NRPA feels a lot like coming back home," Stapleton said.

"While we have a lot of new staff, and we are all somewhat disconnected as more people are

working at home, the close-knit culture and camaraderie that NRPA has is still present. It's great to be back working in a program area that is more directly connected to my background and passions."

Stapleton was named NRPA program area director in November, replacing Stephanie Page, who became the deputy director at the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.

In announcing his hiring to staff, ODA Director Alexis Taylor said: "His work experience, proven leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic, and strong work history give me great confidence that NRPA will continue to excel."

Before joining ODA, Stapleton worked in the private sector as the plant health manager for Bailey Nursery's container division, and he was operations manager for Stettler Supply, an agriculture and industrial irrigation and water treatment supply and construction contracting company. He also owned and operated a landscape construction and maintenance business with his wife, Virginia.

Stapleton's familiarity with the programs under the NRPA umbrella, Agricultural Water Quality, Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), Fertilizer, Pesticides, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), have been helpful as he settles into his new role.

"Initially, I am just trying to get up to speed on all the work the various programs are doing as well as start to build relationships with the various stakeholders," Stapleton said. "Lucky for me, I have a bit of a head start on some of this. My initial goal is to continue the efforts started through the process management system and to continue to improve and refine the programs so that we reach our target outcome measures. Additionally, we will be quickly starting to gear up for the 2023 legislative session, and I will be working with managers and staff on the proposed legislative concepts and program option packages."

Stapleton says he views his role as one of servant leadership.

"My goal is to make sure that managers and staff have the skills and resources necessary to be successful in their positions for the success of the programs," he said. "I also see my role in helping staff grow in whatever their career goals are, whether that is here at ODA or otherwise. On a broader level, it's my job to set the big picture goals and direction for the programs, ensuring that they are consistent in achieving the larger agency strategic plan. My role is not to be the expert but to be an advocate and to make the policy calls when needed."

Although Stapleton is just starting as NRPA Program Area Director, it's not the first time he's served in that capacity

MEAT PROCESSING in OREGON

Progress continues with the State Meat Initiative. On December 9, 2021, the Oregon Department of Agriculture provided updates in the Meat Industry Stakeholders meeting.

The first update was on the State Meat Inspection Program effort. Just minutes before the meeting, USDA called the ODA Food Safety Program to report that after reviewing the approximately 600-page program rules submitted by ODA, they approved ODA to move to the next step. This was key milestone to reach and one that ODA has been working on for over a year. This also keeps the State Meat Inspection Program on track to begin in July 2022.

The other update from ODA was related to the Oregon Meat Processing Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant Program. This grant program is the result of HB 2785 that was passed in the state legislative session earlier in 2021. The first step in setting up the grant program was accomplished when the draft rules were published at the beginning of December. A public hearing on the proposed rules will be held on December 15, 2021 and written comment can be sent to ODA through December 22. At this point, we are expecting to open the grant application period in February 2022.

Background:

The seeds of the State Meat Initiative began in 2020 as the pandemic and related restrictions illuminated weaknesses in our national food supply system. This was especially evident in Oregon around the meat supply as local meat processors struggled to keep up with the increased demand for local meat.

The Oregon legislature responded with legislation to help create options and expand meat processing in the state. In 2020, the Oregon legislature authorized ODA to establish a State Meat Inspection Program, which the ODA's Food Safety Program began working on that summer. Recognizing that more was needed to understand and address the gaps in the food system around meat, ODA facilitated a meat industry stakeholder group beginning in the summer of 2020. Thanks to so many individuals for sharing their perspectives and participating in the surveys for producers and processors, we now have a much greater understanding of the challenges to increasing the meat processing capacity in Oregon to support local demand for local meat. To address these needs will require many organizations coming together. This broader effort to not only establish a State Meat Inspection Program, but also address the gaps in the local food system around meat became known as the State Meat Initiative.

The meat stakeholder group continues to meet during alternating months for all the partners to provide updates on the State Meat Initiative. The next Meat Stakeholder Group meeting will be on February 10, 2022 at 1:00 pm. If you would like more information about the ODA work on the State Meat Initiative, please visit our Meat Processing in Oregon webpage: <https://oda.direct/MeatProcessing>. The contacts for the team working on this effort are listed

at ODA. He also led the Food Safety and Animal Health (FSAH), and Plant Protection and Conservation Program (PPCP) areas. (Story by Andy Zimmerman)

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LAUREN HENDERSON appointed as **DEPUTY DIRECTOR**

Congratulations to Lauren Henderson! He was recently appointed Deputy Director at the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). Prior to his appointment, Henderson served as ODA's assistant director beginning in 2006. As assistant director, he performed as the agency's Chief Financial Officer and oversaw multiple agency programs including Food Safety and Animal Health, Weights and Measures, Internal Services and Administrative Support functions.



“Lauren has been a trustworthy partner and leader over the five years I have worked with him at ODA,” said Alexis Taylor, Director, ODA. **“I am confident he will continue to provide the agency leadership and stability during a time of transition.”**

Governor Kate Brown recently appointed former longtime ODA Deputy Director Lisa Hanson as Executive Director of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB).

Henderson joined ODA more than 20 years ago serving as administrator for ODA's Administrative Services Division and before that served in various roles of responsibility for 13 years at the Oregon State Hospital.

COMING SOON

PESTICIDE ANALYTICAL & RESPONSE CENTER (PARC) BOARD MEETING

JAN. 19, 2022 • 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Virtual meeting
503-986-4651 | <https://oda.direct/PARC>

OREGON STATE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE MEETING FEB. 1 - 3, 2022

Virtual meeting
See website for meeting agenda and details
503-986-4554 | <https://oda.direct/BoardAgriculture>

MEAT STAKEHOLDER GROUP

FEB. 10, 2022 • 1:00 PM
Contact us for details
503-986-4792 | <https://oda.direct/MeatProcessing>

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION (SWCC) QUARTERLY MEETING

FEB. 15, 2022 • 1:00 - 4:00 PM (work session)
FEB. 16 • 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM (public meeting)
Virtual meeting
503-986-4704 | <https://oda.direct/Meetings>