

People & Places

Speaking up for agriculture

Paulette Pyle lends a voice to farmers in the halls of the nation's Capitol

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Paulette Pyle says she is retired after 35 years as grass roots director of the lobbyist group Oregonians for Food and Shelter, but that may not be possible.

For one thing, she works 40 hours a month while new Executive Director Katie Fast gets her feet on the ground. "I told Katie I want to make sure she's successful," Pyle said.

Beyond that, her status as mentor and model — especially to women in agriculture and forestry — may not allow her to simply slide out of the limelight.

The Capital Press caught up with Pyle as she was once again on the move, this time to the Oregon Farm Bureau's annual golf tournament. A sampling of the conversation:

Her best accomplishment?
"You mean what WE'VE done and what WE'VE accomplished?" Pyle corrected, emphasizing that a coalition of people has worked together to represent producers.

"I think the highlight for me has been engaging in a profession that is my passion," she said. "Helping ag and forestry is very rewarding."

She regrets that in an era of highly partisan politics, the people who supply society's



Courtesy of Oregonians for Food and Shelter
Paulette Pyle, shown here during a visit to Washington, D.C., says a unified voice is needed for Oregon agriculture and forestry.

food, fiber and shelter have been "demonized."

And yet there appears to be growing recognition, at least among legislators and agency policy-makers, that rural Oregon and natural resource industries are critical parts of the state's economic structure. Producers have been able to make the case that their viewpoints deserve consideration, Pyle agreed.

"I think, politically, we have," she said. "When we have time to tell our story and present the facts, we do prevail. It's a struggle and it's hard work all the time, but we can get it done."

She has three major concerns over the next couple

years. At the top of her list is the urban-rural divide.

"The biggest challenge is for rural Oregon to stay in business," Pyle said. "Life begins and ends with politics, it's a true statement. Until urban legislators take the time to understand the challenges of the less populated part of the state, that will be the number one challenge."

Second on her list is another divide, this time between various types of farmers, "Initiated by our organic friends," Pyle said. Oregonians for Food and Shelter supports all kinds of agriculture — organic, conventional or using genetically modified crops, she said. But she said organic

Western Innovator Paulette Pyle

Who: Retiring grass roots director of the lobbying group Oregonians for Food and Shelter.

Career: Came to Oregon in late 1970s, was hired by OFS as temporary campaign worker to defeat measures that would have banned application of phenoxy herbicides. OFS offered her a job in 1980 and she was with them until announcing retirement this year.

Personal: 69, lives in Albany with her husband, Ken. They have six grown children and 16 grandchildren.

Awards and honors: Pyle will be presented the Oregon Agri-Business Council's 2015 Ag Connection of the Year Award in November. A council news release said she "excelled at connecting natural resources groups with lawmakers to defend and protect Oregon's natural resources industry."

She previously received the 2013 Ted Young Award from the Oregon Forest Industries Council, which said she has "done so much to unite agriculture and forestry — and not allowed any one of our immediate interests to forsake the greater partnership. She also was presented the 2014 President's Award from the Oregon Farm Bureau.

Advice to her successor, Katie Fast: "Stay close to the ground roots. Don't take your eye off the ag and forestry businesses we represent."



farmers, hoping to get an edge in the market, are trying hard to bend public policy their way and complicate life for farmers who use other tools to get their crops to market.

"We ought to let them all grow what they want to grow on their own private property, and take it from there," Pyle said.

Pyle did not include the flap between Oregon wine grape growers and other farmers over spray drift that can damage vineyards. Some wine grape growers explored taking the issue to the Legislature, but OFS helped steer it to farmer-to-farmer discussions instead.

"I think we are on track to resolve that issue," Pyle said.

Third is the growers themselves. "I believe they need to step it up," Pyle said. "Every farmer in this state, all farmers — GMO, biotech, conventional, organic — needs to stand up and tell their story in a positive way."

On another topic, Pyle praised the young women farmers who have emerged to effectively tell ag's story through social media and at the Legislature.

"They come as a whole person — a mom, a farmer — and present a different version of what agriculture is all about," she said.

Police: Man steals combine, sparks slow-speed chase

By BILL DRAPER
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — John Roth figures it was a bullet to the oil filter that killed his old Case IH combine and brought a slow-speed police chase to an otherwise peaceful end.

Officers fired 18 rounds into the farm implement, which had been stolen Tuesday night from a cornfield east of Ellinwood in central Kansas. But not before the combine rammed two patrol cars, hit a parked pickup truck and damaged power poles as it attempted to elude officers at speeds approaching 20 mph.

"Since 1981 I've chased a lot of vehicles, but we've never chased a combine," Barton County Sheriff Brian Bellendir said.



Courtesy Andrew Sieker via AP
This photo shows a stolen combine on the side of a road near Ellinwood, Kan., where it stopped after police in pursuit fired at the fleeing piece of farm equipment to disable it. Authorities say a Kansas man was arrested after stealing the combine and hitting power poles and law enforcement vehicles as he fled.

formal charges had been filed as of Wednesday afternoon.

Barton County prosecutor Doug Matthews said he anticipated that would happen soon.

Deputies arrived at a county road near Roth's property around 9:45 p.m. Tuesday after receiving a call about an abandoned vehicle. Soon, a 911 call told of a combine with no lights "weaving from ditch to ditch" east of the 1,200-person town, Bellendir said.

Andrew Sieker slowed down for a curve when he encountered the oncoming implement — an eight-row corn head on the front.

"We met right at the curve and I swerved out of the way," said Sieker, himself a farmer. "He swerved and hit some guy wires. It was close."

The combine struck several power poles and a pickup truck in Ellinwood, ripping the corn head from the implement.

When an officer approached, the man put the machine in reverse and rammed the officer's car before fleeing the scene, Bellendir said. During the chase, a deputy pulled in front of the machine to set a roadblock, but it was rammed and dragged. Two officers then opened fire, shooting out the tires and hitting the motor.

The sheriff said the suspect, who owns the vehicle that was found abandoned on the road, was trying to restart the machine when he was taken into custody.

Bellendir said no administrative action would be taken against the officers, who were deemed justified in disabling the farm implement because of the threat it posed.

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Insect researcher: Drones will help feed growing population

By DAVE KOLPACK
Associated Press

GRAND FORKS, N.D. — A college professor who studies insects said Wednesday that unmanned aircraft can help grow better crops and produce more food, but it's going to take more cooperation among researchers to pull it off.

Kansas State entomology professor Brian McCormack said the use of drones in agriculture will be an important application because the world's population is projected to increase by 2 billion people in the next 30 years and

there will be "the same sliver of land" to produce food.

"Access to resources is limited. Not only land, but water and energy," McCormack told attendees at the final day of an annual unmanned aircraft conference.

The UAS Summit and Expo began nine years ago as a regional event but has expanded to include some of the top companies in the industry, including defense contractors Northrup Grumman and General Atomics. North Dakota has one of six sites in the nation testing drones for commercial use and also is home to the nation's first unmanned

aircraft tech park, Grand Sky. The president of Grand Sky, Tom Swoyer Jr., gave the keynote address.

Precision agriculture has become a favorite topic at the expo, partly because it's expected to be the No. 1 industry for drone use. McCormack outlined several possible farming applications, including outfitting unmanned aircraft with the robotic capabilities to collect insect samples or set traps.

"We as researchers have to wrap our minds around it," McCormack said. "For me, personally, this is not only about the pests we have

here, but trying to anticipate what's going to happen in the future with invasive species. Invasive species can completely change the cropping system."

McCormack told the group that making an entomologist part of a drone discussion shows not only how far the industry has advanced, but how many different disciplines it entails.

Afterward, he said earlier research on unmanned aircraft for farming may not have been complete because it didn't include experts in entomology, plant pathology, fertility and cropping systems, to

name a few.

"This is what we do, unfortunately, really well in academia," McCormack said in an interview. "We get into our specialist mode and we want to be so refined in our particular system that we lose sight of the 20 other variables that someone else wants to contribute."

North Dakota State University professor John Nowatzki, who is spearheading a research project that would use a large drone to monitor crop conditions from high altitudes, said he's happy that McCormack emphasized collaboration.

Calendar

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**Saturday-Sunday
Oct. 3-4**

Alpaca Harvest Fest, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Alpacas of Oregon, Sherwood, 503-628-2023. Two farms, one convenient location.

**Wednesday-Sunday
Oct. 7-11**

Trailing of the Sheep Festival, 9 a.m. Sun Valley, Ketchum and Hailey, Idaho.

Saturday, Oct. 10

Oregon Ag in the Classroom Fall Harvest

Dinner, 5-9 p.m., CH2M Hill Alumni Center, Oregon State University Campus, Corvallis. \$50 in advance, \$65 at the door, oregonaitc.org/fall-harvest

**Saturday-Sunday
Oct. 17-18**

The All About Fruit Show, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Clackamas County Fairplex, Canby, Ore. <http://www.homeorchardsociety.org/events/>

Thursday, Oct. 22

Columbia County, Ore., Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, 6:30-9 p.m., Fultans's Pizzeria, 770 E. Columbia River Hwy., Clatskanie.

Thursday, Oct. 22

Livestock grazing water quality seminar, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Fairfield Community Center, 218 E. Main St., Fairfield, Wash. Washington

State University Extension rangeland and livestock management regional specialist Tip Hudson, retired Oregon State University rangeland ecology and management extension specialist John Buckhouse and University of California-Davis rangeland watershed specialist Kenneth Tate will address ranchers during a livestock grazing water quality seminar.

**Friday-Saturday
Oct. 30-31**

Washington State Sheep Producers Annual Convention 8 a.m. Marriott Courtyard, Walla Walla.

**Friday-Saturday
Oct. 30-31**

Northwest Farmers Union Convention, 8

a.m., Northern Quest Casino, 100 N Hayford Road, Airway Heights, Wash. www.northwestfarmersunion.com

**Thursday-Sunday
Nov. 5-8**

American Agri-Women National Convention DoubleTree Hotel, South Portland, Maine.

Friday, Nov. 20

Agri-Business Council of Oregon Denim & Diamonds Auction, Dinner & Awards, 5-10 p.m. Oregon Convention Center, Portland, 503-595-9121.

**Friday-Saturday
Nov. 27-28**

Open Alpaca Barn, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Alpacas of Oregon, Sherwood, 503-628-2023.

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