

People & Places

UC researcher fosters dialogue

Kimberly Rodrigues uses her mediation skills to help ranchers cope with predators

By TIM HEARDEN
Capital Press

WOODLAND, Calif. — Kimberly Rodrigues is well equipped to help mediate disputes between animal activists and livestock producers over how to manage predators, including wolves.

Rodrigues, a forestry expert who now leads a University of California research farm in Hopland, Calif., is studying nonlethal means for warding off the coyotes, mountain lions and other wildlife that seek to prey on the facility's lambs during the winter.

With the lethal taking of any predator becoming more controversial in California, Rodrigues used what she's learned so far to help lead a discussion Feb. 3 in McArthur, Calif., on how livestock operations can coexist with wolves.

"I think one of the main goals ... is to recognize that we're all in this together and we should all work together to seek solutions," said Rodrigues, who took over as director of the Hopland Research and Extension Center on California's North Coast in 2014.

Mediation skills

Rodrigues is used to mediating environmental disputes. A former researcher at the Simpson Lumber Co. in the 1980s, she was for many years one of the UC Cooperative Extension's go-to experts on forestry issues.

In the 1990s, she was involved in the mediation process over what is now the Headwaters Forest Reserve in Humboldt County, where activists fought a company's efforts to harvest old-growth redwood trees.

"That was an interesting time," Rodrigues said. "There were tree sitters and deaths in the woods — it was really crazy. People were talking around the real issues instead of talking to each other."

"I thought I could do a better job discussing the science and facts by working for Cooperative Extension than inside the industry," she said.

Later, as a UCCE region-



Courtesy of UC Regents

Kim Rodrigues, director of the University of California's Hopland Research and Extension Center, talks with another researcher during a breakfast at the UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources headquarters in Davis, Calif. A forestry expert, Rodrigues is now putting her mediation skills to use by helping ranchers find nonlethal ways to ward off predatory wildlife.

al director working in Davis, Calif., Rodrigues handled public outreach efforts for the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Project, a 10-year effort by scientists to identify the pros and cons of fuels-reduction methods in various forest settings.

The project's "public participation team," which Rodrigues led until she took over at Hopland, held workshops and field trips in the woods to gather opinions from different interest groups.

In August, Rodrigues was named to the state Board of Forestry and Fire Protection by Gov. Jerry Brown.

"It was important to me to do something that made a difference," she said of her career. "There aren't that many women in the registered professional forestry ranks..."

Switched majors

A native of Vallejo, Calif., Rodrigues didn't envision herself in forestry or agriculture when she started at the University of California-Berkeley in the late 1970s. She was studying chemical engineering with the idea of blazing a trail for women.

"I really loved chemistry and genetics, and I really loved the fact that only 5 percent of chemical engineers were women," she said.

But her interests changed after she took a summer internship at the Dow Chemical Co.'s plant in Pittsburg, Calif.

"I hated it," she said. "I

started flailing around looking for a major and a friend said, 'Check out forestry.' I went to a summer camp in Quincy (Calif.) and that was all it took."

Rodrigues earned a bachelor's degree in forest management at Cal in 1981 and a master's degree in forest genetics. In 2008, she completed her doctorate in environmental science and management at UC-Berkeley.

Forest adviser

She became a UCCE forest adviser in 1991, coming aboard amid a 15-year controversy over a Pacific Lumber Co. project to log portions of an old-growth forest near Eureka, Calif. An agreement between the company and the federal government resulted in the reserve being established in 1999.

Being involved in mediating the dispute gave Rodrigues experience in trying to work with parties that had become entrenched.

"It was so emotional and polarized by the time I tried to even enter the conversation," she said.

Rodrigues was regional director for UCCE's northern coastal offices from 1999 to 2009, when she focused much of her energy on the Sierra Nevada project. Dozens of scientists worked on the project, whose final report in December concluded that clearing shrubs and woody debris from forest floors can improve

tree growth efficiency and reduce the severity of wildfires but could impact wildlife that rely on dense forest areas for habitat.

At Hopland, Rodrigues leads a facility that maintains a flock of about 500 sheep for shearing workshops and research projects, providing a useful resource for the North Coast's sheep producers.

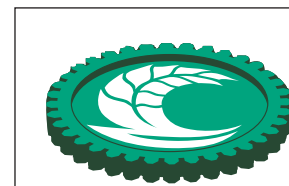
"I have to tell you this is the best job I've had in my whole career," Rodrigues said. You get to work with research of your own and research from others that you bring here to address real challenges. ..."

Predator research

Rodrigues' latest research could have implications for resolving livestock-predator conflicts. The center is now in its first winter lambing season under a new policy of minimizing the killing of coyotes and other wildlife, opting instead to use such tools as guard dogs, fencing, pasture rotation and motion-sensor lights to deter carnivores.

The center — a one-time sheep ranch that the UC purchased in the early 1950s — will serve as a laboratory in the next few years for UC-Berkeley wildlife ecology professor Justin Brashares to study how the wildlife population interacts with livestock.

Gaining knowledge of how to ward off predators could be crucial as ranchers in California worry about the arrival of gray wolves, which have state



Western Innovator

Kimberly Rodrigues

Residence: Woodland, Calif.

Position: Director of the University of California's Hopland Research and Extension Center

Age: 56

Family: Husband John Rodrigues; children Lauren, 28, Julia, 25, Jeanette, 19, Robert, 18

Website: <http://hrec.ucanr.edu>

and federal endangered-species protections and cannot legally be killed. The state is taking comments on a wolf management plan that includes a protocol for livestock producers that recommends many of the same measures that Hopland is taking against other predators.

Wolf dialogue

Already, Rodrigues is being recruited to help foster dialogue between wolf advocates and ranchers, including at the McArthur meeting organized by the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Defenders of Wildlife and other groups.

"One role that UC Cooperative Extension can play besides research and extension is providing neutral facilitation of conversations," Rodrigues said. "That's my key role in wolf conversations."

Rodrigues hopes to get a team of researchers together to help livestock producers and resource agencies find new solutions to living with wolves, she said.

"I didn't have any experience with the fisher or California spotted owls, but we had team members who did and we could bring that to the community," she said. "My experience in the timber wars ... does help no matter what the controversy might be."

"I don't want to ever be perceived as taking sides for or against the livestock industry," she said. "It's how do we support a working landscape. ... I don't think it's either-or. If it's either-or, then the industries are at risk."

Annual AgVocacy Conference set for Feb. 19-20 in Reno

By MITCH LIES
For the Capital Press

The third annual Western Regional AgVocacy Conference, scheduled Feb. 19-20 in Reno, Nev., will feature a presentation by an Emmy-award winning director and several breakout sessions on how best to advocate for agriculture through social media.

Hosted by the AgChat Foundation, the conference will open with a presentation by Matt Rush, former CEO of the New Mexico Farm Bureau and former board member of American Farm Bureau's Foundation for Agriculture. Rush advocates for sharing agricultural stories to keep farming viable, valuable and visible.

Breakout sessions held in-



Submitted photo

National Farm Mom of the Year Shelly Boshart Davis, of Albany, Ore., is pictured with her daughters Kyndall, Ashlynn, Sam and her husband, Geoff. She will be a featured speaker at the upcoming AgVocacy conference in Reno, Nev.

termittently over the two days are designed to help beginning and advanced agricultural advocates share their stories

through social media, said Marie Bowers, vice president of the AgChat Foundation and a fifth-generation Oregon grass

Online

For more information, visit <http://reno.agchat.rocks> or call AgChat Foundation Executive Director Jenny Schweigert at 309-241-8803.

seed farmer.

Also, Conrad Weaver, Emmy-award winning director of the documentary "Great American Wheat Harvest," will speak to participants about his soon-to-be-released documentary titled "Thirsty Land," which chronicles the effects of drought on farming in the Western United States.

The conference will close with a presentation by Shelly Boshart Davis, Monsanto's reigning Farm Mom of the Year, who is a grass seed and

straw farmer from Oregon.

"AgChat has been a motivation in my getting involved in 'agvocacy,'" Boshart Davis said. "Seeing others share their story inspired me to tell mine. I'm honored to be able to share my story and believe it is my responsibility and privilege to encourage others to do the same."

Bowers said she hopes participants leave Reno with a little better knowledge of how to share their story on social media and with a motivation to encourage other people to do the same.

The conference will be held at Silver Legacy Resort and Casino, 407 N. Virginia St. Rates vary from \$119 for a student to \$149 for a farmer and rancher to \$199 for an agribusiness.

Calendar

To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on "Submit an Event." Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301.

Monday, Feb. 15

Weed Identification and Control in Pasture and Hay Ground, Oregon State University Extension, SORE, Central Point, Ore. 541-776-7371 ext. 208. Weed biology, identification, matching control methods to specific weeds. Participants bring dry or fresh samples in individual bags. <https://secure.oregonstate.edu/osuext/register/973>

Thursday, Feb. 18

WAFLA Annual Labor Conference, Central Washington University, Ellensburg. www.wafla.org/

Wednesday, Feb. 24

Southern Idaho Direct Seed Workshop, Shiloh Inn Conference Center, Idaho Falls, (208) 334-2353. www.idahowheat.org/

Saturday, Feb. 27

Mid-Valley Winter Ag Fest, Polk County Fairgrounds, Rickreall, Ore., 503-428-8224. Events will promote local ag commerce and education and provide an environment that is fun and informative for the entire family. mwwagfest.com/

Sunday, Feb. 28

Mid-Valley Winter Ag Fest, Polk County Fairgrounds, Rickreall, Ore., 503-428-8224. Events will promote local ag commerce and education and provide an environment that is fun and informative for the entire family. mwwagfest.com/

Tuesday, March 1

Fruit Ripening & Ethylene Management Workshop, Postharvest Technology Center, University of California-Davis. <http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/>

Wednesday, March 2

22nd Fruit Ripening & Ethylene Management Workshop, Postharvest Technology Center, University of California-Davis.

<http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/>

Friday, March 4

Ag Chemical Collection Event, Redwood Transfer Station, Grants Pass, Ore., 541-690-9983. Pre-registration is required by Feb. 18. www.rogueriverwc.org/

Saturday, March 5

Ag Chemical Collection Event, Rogue Disposal Transfer Station, White City, Ore., 541-690-9983. Pre-registration is required by Feb. 18. www.rogueriverwc.org/

Saturday, March 12

Spring into Gardening, McMinville Community Center, McMinville, Ore., 503-434-7517. This

year's theme will be Home Landscaping: Small Changes, Big Impact. Presented by Oregon State University Extension and the Yamhill County Master Gardeners Association.

Friday, March 18

2016 Oregon FFA State Convention, Oregon State University, Corvallis. <http://www.oregonffa.com>

Northwest Horse Fair & Expo 2016, Linn County Fair and Expo Center, Albany, Ore. The largest equine expo in the Northwest will feature fancy dancing horses, strutting stallions, clinics by world-class horse trainers and riders, breed and stallion review demos, equine entertainment and a trade show. <http://equinepromotions.net/>

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