

People & Places

Ag pilot's career up in the air

Paul McAlvain's love of helicopters helps region's farmers with their crops

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — Paul McAlvain grew up in the city but working in an urban setting was never an option for him.

"I was destined for ag," said McAlvain, a helicopter pilot with 12,000 hours flying time, about three-fourths of it spent spraying farm fields. "I'm not an office person so this is my office. I would much rather be out in the fields or mountains."

Born and raised in Boise, Idaho's largest city, McAlvain went straight to helicopter school after graduating from high school.

"I just got a wild hair and took out a huge loan and went to school," he said. "I found out I was good at it and I was working after four months."

He has flown and sprayed farm fields in the Pendleton, Ore., area and most recently in Ontario, where he owns Pauly's Helicopter Services.

Though the job is dangerous — "It's horribly dangerous," he laughs — he said it's a perfect fit for his personality.



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Paul McAlvain stands next to the helicopter he uses to spray farm fields May 17 in Ontario, Ore. He went to helicopter school straight out of high school and has spent about 9,000 hours in the air spraying crops.

"I like to push my limits," said McAlvain, 36. "With this, you're always doing something kind of fun and dangerous."

McAlvain, who is also a licensed instructor, flies several types of helicopters and pilots the local Life Flight helicopter.

"He's an excellent helicopter pilot," said Tommy Frazier, owner of Frazier Aviation, which provides aviation services at the Ontario Airport. "He's rated in various types of helicopters; that

takes some talent."

McAlvain said that when spraying farm fields, his helicopter is as close as 5 feet from the ground, compared to about 8-10 feet for an airplane crop duster.

His helicopter can hold 130 gallons of spray while some of the newer airplane crop dusters can hold around 300 gallons, but he reloads straight from a truck in the field instead of having to return to the airport.

"The number one difference is speed," he said.

"We're traveling about 70 (mph) while the airplanes are going about 120 to 140."

McAlvain said few people know that helicopters are used to spray farm fields and even many farmers in the area don't know that he can spray certain crops, such as potatoes.

He said his biggest challenge is weather.

"The weather's been really bad the past couple years and this year the weather has been a major challenge," he said. "We're shut down after winds reach 12 mph and



Western Innovator

Paul McAlvain

Occupation: Ag helicopter pilot

Company: Pauly's Helicopter Services

Age: 36

Family: Wife, Vanessa; son, Darius, 5

Website: <http://paulyshelicopterservicegov.com/>

around here, that happens all the time."

McAlvain's business is family run. His wife, Vanessa, takes care of the bookkeeping and other duties, while his 5-year-old son, Darius, is already starting to learn the trade so he can take over the business some day.

Though only 5, Darius already has a log book with hours in it — McAlvain's helicopter has dual controls.

"He'll have tons of hours (and) he'll be ready to fly before he can even drive," McAlvain said. "When he gets his license, he'll be ready to go to work."

Agriculture students shine at Oregon Envirothon

By JAN JACKSON
For the Capital Press

SILVERTON, Ore. — The 21st annual Oregon Envirothon was May 5 at the Oregon Gardens in Silverton.

The five top winning teams were Logos Charter School, Medford; Newberg High School FFA; Amity High School; Sutherlin High School FFA Team 2; and Sutherlin High School Team A.

The Logos Charter School team will compete July 23-29 in the National Envirothon at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmetsburg, Md.

Newberg FFA, which also placed first in the FFA Division, will compete Oct. 25-28 during the 90th National FFA Convention and Expo in Indianapolis.

Bailey Field, FFA adviser



Inka Bajandas/Oregon Forestry Resources Institute

From left, Kennedy Rainey, Tyler Bostock and Kylie Holveck use Biltmore sticks to determine tree measurements for the Envirothon Forestry Practicum.

and ag teacher at Newberg, spoke with pride about her FFA members taking a first in the FFA Division and scoring the highest in the agriculture soil and water conservation stewardship event.

"This was my first year at Newberg, and fortunately I had the help of long time biology, ecology and horticulture instructor and Envirothon trainer Pete Siderius," Fields said. "Newberg was repre-

Online

www.oregonenvirothon.org

sented by a five-member FFA and a five-member freshman team this year. It is always exciting to see them put in all that effort and see it rewarded."

Students train and test throughout the school year to compete in four hands-on natural resource categories — aquatic ecology, soils and land use, forestry and wildlife and one current environmental issue, which this year was ag soil and water conservation stewardship.

Envirothon was started by the Pennsylvania Soil and Water Conservation District in 1979. Oregon's first Envirothon was in 1997 with five teams; 32 teams competed this year.

In 2003, the Marion County SWCD partnered with the Oregon Forest Resources Institute and moved the competition to the Oregon Gardens. OFRI will direct future Envirothon competitions starting with the 2018 event.

OFRI Senior Manager of Education Julie Woodward said 200 high school students competed this year.

"It started out as a very wet day, but students kept positive attitudes and we saw some amazing results," Woodward said. "The advisers and instructors put a lot of time and energy into preparing students for the event and the test writers and judges routinely comment on how amazed they are with the skills and expertise of the students."

"We are looking forward to Envirothon 2018."

Calendar

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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 or emailed to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

Saturday-Sunday May 27-28

Alpaca Shearing Day and Sale. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Alpacas of Oregon, 21345 SW Aebischer Road, Sherwood, Ore. Join EasyGo Farm at Alpacas of Oregon and take a break from the Memorial Day Winery Tours to watch the alpacas get their annual haircuts. Get up close, hand feed them and handle their luxurious fleece. Shearing Day is Saturday. On Sunday, learn to felt an alpaca gift. Phone 503-348-6954 to reserve a spot; \$25-\$75 covers your materials and instruction. Hand-spinners, knitters and other fiber artists will find fleece and yarn. Visitors can chat with four long-time livestock breeders who've raised llamas, horses, sheep and goats. www.easygofarm.net/AOOMem-Day.

Wednesday-Friday May 31-June 2

2017 Oregon Cattlemen Mid-year Meeting, Wildhorse Casino, 46510 Wildhorse Blvd., Pendleton, Ore. The annual 2 1/2-day midyear event is where Oregon cattlemen and women gather to get updates on the latest news in Oregon agriculture, hear from top industry speakers and reconnect with fellow ranchers. <http://orcattle.com/>.

Thursday, June 1

OSU Wasco County Extension Service Pre-harvest Tour. 7:45 a.m.-1 p.m. Orchard View Farms Dallesport Orchard, Highway 14,

Dallesport, Wash. The tour starts at the Dallesport orchard, then proceeds to the Omeg Family Farms Grossmiller Block at 3187 Three Mile Road in The Dalles, Ore. It then goes to the Dave Cooper Orchard, 2270 Dry Hollow Road for lunch.

Four-Part Farm/Ranch Succession Planning Workshop. 6-8:30 p.m. Canby High School, 721 SW Fourth Ave., Canby, Ore. A free four-part workshop on succession planning with one-hour personal counseling sessions for your family after each workshop. Light dinner 6 to 6:30, workshop 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Course 4 on June 1 is Passing on Management Roles. RSVP required. Organized by Clackamas Small Business Development Center and Rogue Farm Corps. Cost: Free. <http://bit.ly/2opTHqO>.

Thursday-Saturday June 1-3

Puget Sound Junior Livestock Show and Sale. Skagit County Fairgrounds, 479 W. Taylor St., Mount Vernon, Wash. <http://www.puget-soundjuniorlivestock.org/>

Wednesday, June 7

"Our Valley, Our Future" Breakfast. 7:15-8:45 a.m. Emmanuel Baptist Church, 1515 E. College Way, Mount Vernon, Wash. Key-note speaker Derek Sandison, director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, will share his perspective on the trade and economic outlook for Washington and on the Skagit agricultural industry. Reservations are required. Call 360-336-3974 or email LindaT@skagitonians.org. Website: www.skagitonians.org

Friday, June 9

Farm Practices to Support Beneficial Insects. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. SOREC Teaching Farm, 569 Han-

ley Road, Central Point, Ore. This is Day 1 of a two-day class to raise awareness of on-farm beneficial insects and birds and how to identify them. Learn about the role they play in farming hand-in-hand with nature and how to create "farmscaping" to attract and promote active beneficials. Day 2 is June 30. Cost: \$15 one/\$25 two from the same farm. Website: <http://bit.ly/JacksonSmall-FarmDream>.

Wednesday, June 14

Six-week Forestry Short Course. 9 a.m.-noon. Federal Building meeting room, Seventh Street and College Avenue, St. Maries, Idaho. This course will be six successive Wednesdays. The \$38 fee includes resource material. Register by phone at 208-245-2422 before June 7.

Thursday-Friday June 15-16

2017 Interpera Congress. Wenatchee Confluence Technology Center, 285 Technology Center Way, Wenatchee, Wash. The conference features presentations from world experts on emerging pear varieties, high-density planting, root stock, harvest and packing house mechanization, integrated pest management successes, export trade flows and successful practices for building consumer demand. <http://ncwctc.com>.

Friday-Sunday June 16-18

Glenwood Ketchum Kalf Rodeo and Bull Bash. Glenwood Rodeo Grounds, Trout Lake Highway, Glenwood, Wash. The Bull Bash starts at 7 p.m. June 16, followed by the rodeo, which starts at 12:30 p.m. June 17-18. Website: <http://business.gorge.net/glenwoodrodeo>.

Saturday, June 17

Forest Thinning and Pruning Field Day. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. University of Idaho Extension office, 1808 N. Third St., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Whether you have problems with insects, disease or concerns about fire, the response from foresters is nearly universal: Thin your forest. Presentations about thinning and financial assistance will be followed by a field trip to a thinned stand. A \$20 fee includes a field notebook or publications. Register by June 9.

Tuesday, June 20

Trees and Taxes workshop. 5-7:30 p.m. Coos County Extension Office, 631 Alder St., Myrtle Point, Ore. This class is for anyone with forest management expenses, recent forest income or planning for future income from their forestland. Tammy Cushing, Extension specialist in forest economics, management and policy, will explain topics many landowners are unaware of and the special provisions in the Internal Revenue Code that pertain to forestland and income generated from the land. This session will help improve the records you keep on your forestland as well as minimize the taxes that you pay for income generated by your forest. Pre-registration is required by June 16. For questions, call Shawna at 541-572-5263. Website: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/coos/>.

Tuesday-Wednesday June 20-21

Center for Produce Safety Research Symposium. Hyatt Regency Denver Tech Center, 7800 E. Tufts Ave., Denver, Colo. Agricultural water will kick off the program agenda. This session will focus on four CPS-funded research programs that will help stakeholders better understand the factors involved in sourcing, sampling, testing and

treating specific types of agricultural water.

Thursday, June 22

Oregon Angus Field Day. 4-10 p.m. Quail Valley Ranch, Prineville, Ore. Cattle on display, contests with prizes, a meal and a time to visit. For more information, contact Becky Tekansik, Quail Valley Ranch, 541-699-8562, or Dick Hubman, president of the Oregon Angus Association, 541-601-5495.

Tuesday, June 27

Range Field Day. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Northern Great Basin Experimental Range, 100 Placidea Butte Road, Riley, Ore. Presentations will include managing wildfires, livestock grazing for fuels management, safe sites and restoration of sagebrush rangeland. For more information, contact Chad Boyd, office: 541-573-8939, cell: 541-589-4990, email: chad.boyd@oregonstate.edu. To RSVP for lunch, call Petrina White at 541-573-4085.

Wednesday-Saturday June 28-July 1

128th Annual Washington State Grange Convention. Ocean Shores Convention Center, 120 W. Chance a La Mer NW, Ocean Shores, Wash.

Thursday-Friday June 29-30

3rd International Conference on Livestock & Nutrition. 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Avani Atrium, 880 Phetchaburi Road, Bangkok, Thailand. The Bangkok Livestock Nutrition Conference welcomes attendees, presenters and exhibitors from all over the world. The theme is "Leading Innovation in Livestock for Sustainable Farming." Cost: \$699. Website: <http://livestocknutrition.conferenceseries.com/>.

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