

# Oregon

## OWA educates, advocates for Oregon agriculture



By ALIYA HALL  
Capital Press

Along most of the interstates, highways and major roads that bisect Oregon's farmland, signs have sprouted prominently identifying the many different crops that are grown.

The organization behind the signs is Oregon Women for Agriculture, an association founded in 1969 to educate the public about the economic and ecological importance of agriculture.

"We're about education, and people didn't really understand what they were driving past, and it's important to us for them to know what it was," said Dona Coon, former OWA president and daughter-in-law of Pat Roberts, who initially created the concept of the signs.

OWA has partnered with the nonprofit Oregon Aglink, which produces the signs. OWA then distributes the signs to farmers across the state at no cost to the farmers. There are more than 200 identification signs across the state, according to Oregon Aglink's website.



Courtesy of Oregon Women for Agriculture

The state officers for Oregon Women for agriculture are, from left, Dona Coon, past president; Tracy Duerst, treasurer; Debbie Crocker, president; Helle Ruddenklau, vice president; Mary Hood, second vice president; Emily Duerst, secretary; and Jessica Hanna, corresponding secretary. OWA is a multi-generational association that educates the public about agriculture.



Aliya Hall/Capital Press

Signs along major Oregon roads and highways identify crops that are grown. The concept of the idea came in the 1970s from an original Oregon Women for Agriculture member, Pat Roberts.

Mallory Phelan, vice president of operations at Oregon Aglink, said that the association appreciates their partner-

ship with OWA to promote the crops farmers and ranchers are growing.

"Thanks to the two organizations, the road crop signs have vast reach all across the state and are appreciated by Oregonians as well as those passing through from other states," she said.

The organization first formed when farm women in the Willamette Valley spoke up against the shutdown of grass seed field burning.

Now, the association focuses on all aspects of agriculture, and its mission is "Working together to communicate the story of today's agriculture."

"I feel it's really important

that we tell our story. Generally, most people don't understand it," Debbie Crocker, OWA president, said. "We educate on our side, so when we do communicate, we're communicating the facts and the public is understanding agriculture better."

The signs have been a visual way for OWA to do just that.

"(We've had) really, really good responses online and having people talk to us personally," Coon said. "One woman was so excited to know what was going on that she sent in a \$100 donation to help make more signs made."

With the influx of visitors

to Oregon for the solar eclipse on Aug. 21, farmers have been calling OWA asking for more signs to display.

There are eight OWA chapters spread across the state with about 300 members.

Crocker got involved in OWA 35 years ago. She was inspired to take a leadership position after seeing what "great representatives" the past presidents were, she said.

Along with the signs and advocacy, OWA also hosts an annual fundraising auction — last year was its 30th anniversary — and has a legislative committee of volunteers to speak on behalf of agriculture at the state Capitol.

## Political dispute costs irrigation district \$1.9 million

### Lawmaker claims project funding vetoed as political retaliation

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

SALEM — A political dispute over new taxes on health care in Oregon is being blamed for an irrigation district losing \$1.9 million to pipe an open canal.

Lawmakers approved money for the Bradshaw Drop Irrigation Canal Piping Project in July as part of a broader spending bill, but Gov. Kate Brown has now vetoed funding for that project and several others in Southern Oregon.

Rep. Sal Esquivel, R-Medford, said he agreed to vote for the health care taxes — giving the proposal the necessary three-fifths majority to pass the House — in return for the spending projects.

Since then, however, Esquivel has thrown his support behind an effort to refer the health care taxes to voters as part of a ballot initiative.

In retaliation, Brown has vetoed several projects that are important to his district, Esquivel said.

"She's vindictive toward me," he said. "She's politicizing good projects just for vindictiveness."

A spokesman for the governor did not respond to a request for comment, but in her written announcement of the vetoes, Brown said, "The cornerstone of all negotiations, whether they occur in a public or private arena, is the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing."

While it's disappointing the "political feud" has caused the state funding to fall through, the Rogue River Irrigation District is still expecting to begin piping its canal in autumn 2018, said Brian Hampson, the district's manager.

The irrigation district still has \$3.4 million available from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to pipe 1.2 miles of the 3.3-mile canal, he said.

This portion of the piping project is more complicated due to environmental studies and logistical complexities, which is why it's expected to cost more than the remainder of the project, Hampson said.

The \$1.9 million from the state government would have been dedicated to the more straight-forward task of replacing 2.1 miles of canal with piping, he said.

It's unclear how the irrigation district will now pay for that segment, but Hampson said he's hopeful to "quit all the political crap" and find funding for the project on its own merits.

Currently, the open canal is leaky, resulting in losses of water that could otherwise be dedicated to irrigation or left in-stream for fish habitat.

By pressurizing the irrigation system, farmers will be able to convert from flood irrigation to more efficient sprinklers, saving water while reducing sediment runoff.

Eventually, the irrigation district also expects to evaluate using the pressurized water to generate hydroelectric power.

## Tillamook County enacts new wetland process

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

Wetland restoration projects on farmland will have to clear a new hurdle in Oregon's Tillamook County to ensure they don't disrupt agricultural practices. However, the county's newly enacted ordinance isn't expected to block wetland projects as much as steer them to the least-contentious areas, experts say.

"Nobody's intention was that we never see another wetland project in Tillamook," said Mary Anne Nash, public policy counsel for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

Landowners throughout most of Oregon are allowed outright to convert properties in "exclusive farm use" zones into wetlands, allowing them to sell credits to offset development on wetlands elsewhere.

Wetland restoration projects have been prominent in Tillamook County, where moist conditions are prevalent, but the conversions have also been controversial.

In some cases, opponents criticize such projects for taking farmland out of production.

Restoring wetlands by removing levees or making other land modifications can also reduce drainage and increase

groundwater tables on surrounding properties, impairing their agricultural value, said Nash.

"In our mind, this is like any other non-farm use moving into a farm zone," she said.

In 2016, Oregon lawmakers considered a bill that would increase local government scrutiny of wetland projects across the state. Ultimately, the legislation — Senate Bill 1517 — was approved after being pared down to affect only Tillamook County.

Tillamook County's commissioners have decided to take advantage of that statute by enacting the recent ordinance,

under which wetland projects will be subject to a "conditional use" review.

Before such permits are approved or denied, the parties involved could go through a "collaborative process" to resolve potential conflicts.

Farm and conservation groups will also be helping to create an "inventory" of Tillamook County's wetlands and areas where such projects might be suitable.

The inventory will be useful in guiding wetland projects away from "hot spots" where they're likely to clash with neighboring farmers, said Nash.



Capital Press graphic

# HARVEST. SMARTER.

Introducing the S700 Combines.

The new S700 Combines are the latest in our proven S-Series line, built to deliver consistently high grain quality — no matter the harvest conditions or the operator. Get the most from your field with intelligent, automated features like ActiveYield™, which lets you make real-time decisions from the cab, eliminating manual calibration and improving your yield data.

And to get the most grain out of every acre with the best quality, add the Combine Advisor™ package. With it, the combine is constantly making automated adjustments, delivering exactly what you asked it to. And you'll see the results, too. The ActiveVision™ cameras show you free grain vs. foreign material, right on your display.

What are you waiting for? Get in the driver's seat of the most intelligent, automated combine you've ever driven and get ready to harvest. Smarter.

**JOHN DEERE**

[JohnDeere.com/Combines](http://JohnDeere.com/Combines)

### John Deere Dealers

See one of these dealers for a demonstration

**Belcorp Ag, LLC**  
Modesto, CA

**Camp Equipment, LLC**  
Burns, OR  
Ontario, OR  
Weiser, ID

**Campbell Tractor & Implement**  
Fruitland, ID  
Homedale, ID  
Nampa, ID  
Wendell, ID

**Evergreen Implement Inc.**  
Coulee City, WA  
Moses Lake, WA  
Ritzville, WA

**Kern Machinery Inc.**  
Bakersfield, CA  
Buttonwillow, CA  
Delano, CA

**Papé Machinery**  
Four Lakes, WA  
Madras, OR  
Merrill, OR  
Moscow, ID  
Ponderay, ID  
Tangent, OR  
Tekoa, WA  
Walla Walla, WA

**RDO Equipment Co.**  
Pasco, WA

**Washington Tractor, Incorporated**  
Chehalis, WA  
Ellensburg, WA  
Lynden, WA  
Quincy, WA

