

Radio work, side jobs keep small-farm operator on farm

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

It took a half-dozen years and about as many side jobs, but Matt Brechwald is now able to stay on his small farm most of the time.

"The whole reason I do all the things I do is so I can farm, and so I can manage the farm as efficiently as possible," he said.

Brechwald proves it can be tough making a living on a small farm or ranch, but that there are also solutions.

He made the switch from part-time farmer with full-time job elsewhere — his was as a Boise police officer — to full-time farmer with a collection of side jobs. Ag radio broadcaster, adjunct professor, livestock courier, gopher



Brad Carlson/Capital Press

Matt Brechwald grew his podcast and radio broadcast presence to a sizable scale in recent years as part of a multi-venture effort to stay on his small farm most of the time.

exterminator and rental property owner are among his recent jobs off the farm.

"The farm is not capable of providing all necessary

household income, so to be able to stay here, I found ways to work from home and have a more flexible schedule," Brechwald said.

"Off-farm income" is how he labels revenue a farmer can generate outside the agricultural operation, such as a venture tapping a farmer's unique skills and collection of in-demand equipment.

"Entrepreneurship is a very, very good way to generate off-farm income," Brechwald said.

Farmers, in addition to possessing skills ranging from mechanical and construction work to handling heavy equipment and chemicals, "have a very strong work ethic, which makes them very good at providing agricultural services for other people," he said.

But since mistakes and missed opportunities can be magnified on small farms or ranches due to limitations on

spreading risk, the off-farm venture must offer substantial flexibility in addition to good financial prospects.

"It's all about farming," said Brechwald, 44.

He owned and operated Idaho Gopher Control for five years before selling the business in 2017 and plowing the proceeds back into the Kuna, Idaho, farm he runs with his wife, Autumn, and their daughter. They raise cattle, pigs, goats and hay on 25 acres they own in an area experiencing suburban growth.

Brechwald lately is busy doing podcast and broadcast work — including for the national FFA organization and a regional retail chain, both stemming from independent podcasting he started five years ago. He said the rurally

focused RFD-TV noticed his early work.

He coaches and consults — clients include businesses interested in doing their own ag podcasts — teaches courses, gives public presentations, and develops content for instructional or marketing purposes.

Ag-driven entrepreneurship is a key theme for Brechwald, a Montana State University animal and range sciences graduate who also holds a master's degree in criminal justice from Boise State University.

He said he aims to grow his own off-farm ventures and "coach more people on doing what I want to do, which is to stay out in the country — although the city is coming to me."

Speaker encourages women in agriculture to find their strengths

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Networking and motivation was the theme of the Women in Ag lunch, hosted by Rabo AgriFinance for clients on Thursday.

Keynote speaker Sarah Beth Aubrey — an executive coach, author, entrepreneur and cattle producer — engaged women in discussions on using their strengths and rethinking priorities to improve effectiveness on their operations.

Agriculture is shifting, with massive changes in leadership as the next generation takes the helm. Women need to be preparing themselves for their role in that change and remember that leadership doesn't have to be at the head of the room.

"I encourage you to make a concentrated effort to identify your strengths," she said.

Leading with those strengths will result in higher confidence, better performance and higher earnings for their operations. It will also lead to better decision-making and alleviate women's inherent tendency to try to be all things to all people, she said.

She suggested women start with the Gallup StrengthFinder questionnaire and embrace those strengths in making decisions and leading their team.

"When we harness our strength, people follow us," she said. Women can do a "phenomenal job" in agriculture with that leadership piece.

Knowing their strengths, they can also surround them-



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Sarah Beth Aubrey, left, speaks with women at the Rabo AgriFinance Women in Ag luncheon in Twin Falls, Idaho, on May 24.

selves with people who have different strengths to make the operation more efficient and effective. And while they sometimes inherit the team they work with, there's opportunity for more diversity with new hires to fill in the strength gaps, she said.

Identifying strengths and being motivated to make effective changes are not enough, however. Practical application is needed for success, she said.

To facilitate that application, Aubrey demonstrated a priority matrix with four boxes women can use to sort priorities for their operations.

The first box contains the low maintenance/high value items, important things that add value that are functioning efficiently. It's the win/win box, she said.

The second box contains the low value/low maintenance items, which can be a real sand trap. Those are the quick and easy things that people might be filling their time with instead of delegating those duties. And if they have low value, those items

might not be needed any more.

The third box contains the high maintenance/high value items. Those items can be another sand trap for leaders and a black hole for CEOs. Those items are important because there's high value there, but they probably also need to be on the list to delegate to someone else.

The final box contains the no value/high maintenance items, the dog house box and a waste of resources. Those things are not important but take a lot of time. A lot of times they tend to be referenced with the statement "but we've always done it that way," she said.

Agriculture is a process-oriented industry, and the priority matrix gives women a tool to dissect tasks and set priorities to be able to apply their strengths, she said.

The take-away is that women have value and can use their strengths effectively for their own organizations, their farms and the industry, she said.

Bill would ease restrictions on livestock, bee haulers

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

A bill in the U.S. Senate would ease strict trucking regulations for haulers of live animals and insects requiring rest time for drivers that can endanger livestock.

Introduced by Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., and 10 of his colleagues, Transporting Livestock Across America Safely Act addresses a national mandate by the Department of Transportation requiring electronic logging devices to track truckers' time on the road.

At issue for the livestock industry are the hours of service rules, which limit commercial truckers to 11 hours of driving time and 14 consecutive hours of on-duty time in a 24-hour period.

Once they reach that limit, they have to pull off the road for 10 hours before driving again.

The mandate went into effect on Dec. 18 with a compliance exemption for livestock haulers until March 18. DOT again extended that exemption to mid-June, and a congressional delay extended it through Sept. 30.

The rule includes an exemption for agriculture for the first 150 air miles, after which truckers must start tracking their time.

The Senate bill would increase that exemption to 300 air miles and allow drivers to complete their trip regardless of how long they've been on the road if they are within 150 air miles of their delivery point.

It also extends the maximum drive time to a minimum



Tim O'Byrne/Working Ranch magazine

A bill introduced in the U.S. Senate would ease restrictions on hours of service for truckers hauling livestock and honeybees.

of 15 hours and a maximum of 18 hours and requires drivers to then take a break that is five hours less than their maximum time on duty.

In addition, it exempts loading and unloading from the drive time calculation and allows drivers to take a break without counting toward their on-duty time.

Livestock organizations were quick to applaud the bill and the senators' action.

The current hours of service rule presents a challenge for the cattle industry and can often jeopardize the health and wellbeing of livestock, Kevin Kester, National Cattlemen's Beef Association president, said.

"Hauling livestock is inherently different than hauling products like paper towels or bottles of water. Live cattle can't simply be left unattended in a trailer — especially in very hot or cold weather — for extended periods," he said.

"We feel like this bill takes

into account the flexibility that livestock haulers need," Allison Rivera, NCBA executive director of government affairs, said.

National Pork Producers Council and the U.S. Cattlewomen's Association agree.

NPPC has argued that because livestock are vulnerable to health issues triggered by extreme temperatures, long-established industry standards preclude drivers from stopping while hauling animals.

"NPPC is pleased that Congress recognizes that the hours of service rules need to be reformed to address the unique challenges and needs of livestock haulers," Dave Warner, NPPC spokesman, said.

The bill finally affords livestock and insect haulers flexibility in the hours of service rules, Steve Hiker, USCA transportation committee chairman, said.

"We asked and Congress answered," he said.

Environmental groups challenge Oregon timber sale over rodents that live in trees

Project located on the Umpqua National Forest

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

Three environmental groups are suing the U.S. Forest Service to stop an 847-acre logging project on the Umpqua National Forest in southern Oregon, about 22 miles southeast of Cottage Grove.

Cascadia Wildlands, Oregon Wild and the Benton Forest Coalition filed the lawsuit May 16 in U.S. District Court in Eugene, Ore., arguing the Quartz Integrated Project threatens a small tree-dwelling rodent called the red tree vole, which is prey for the northern spotted owl.

"It is incredibly disappointing to again witness the Forest Service targeting mature forests to solely benefit private timber interests," said Nick Cady, legal director at Cascadia Wildlands.

The lawsuit also names Alice Carlton, Umpqua National Forest supervisor, as a defendant. Kimberly Briggs, district ranger for the Cottage



Northwest Ecosystem Survey Team Environmental groups are suing the Forest Service to stop logging on the Umpqua National Forest to protect the red tree vole, a small tree-dwelling rodent that serves as prey for the northern spotted owl.

Grove Ranger District, signed off on the Quartz project in 2017, which was designed to improve the health of tree stands, increase fire resiliency, maintain meadow and aquatic habitats and provide for a timber sale.

The project includes 847 acres of commercial tree thinning, 374 acres of surface and ladder fuels treatment and 48 acres of meadow restoration. Most of the logging would be done by cable systems

and helicopters.

In its environmental analysis and biological opinion, the Forest Service found that logging will likely impact the northern spotted owl, downgrading 349 acres of nesting, roosting and foraging habitat and removing 305 acres of dispersal habitat.

However, the project "is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the spotted owl and is not likely to adversely modify spotted owl critical habitat."

Red tree vole surveys were also conducted during the fall of 2016. According to the lawsuit, the Northwest Ecosystem Survey Team found 75 vole nests in the forests slated for logging, but the Forest Service decided to proceed with the project.

The red tree vole is already in a tough position, Cady said, due to past logging in Oregon's Coast and Cascade mountain ranges.

The North Oregon Coast population of voles is considered a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, from the Siuslaw River north to the Columbia River, due to habitat loss and fragmentation.

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