

Port hires Genevieve Scholl for new post

Genevieve Scholl joined the Port of Hood River staff on Jan. 12 as Special Projects Manager. Scholl formerly worked from 2001 - 2008 as Destination Marketing Director for the Hood River County Chamber of Commerce, and has since served as Outreach Manager for the social enterprise nonprofit Farmers Conservation Alliance (FCA), also based in Hood River.

This is a new staff position at the Port, with responsibilities to play a lead role in managing the Port's internal and external communication systems and carrying out a variety of unique projects related to policy development, project and legislative advocacy, stakeholder relationships and regional collaboration.



Genevieve Scholl

"The Port Commission is increasingly engaged in regional economic development advocacy and collaboration with our local and regional partners. Genevieve will play a key role in these efforts for the Port as well as improving the Port's overall communication and public outreach functions," said Port Executive Director Michael McElwee. "Genevieve brings a broad background in communications, opera-

tions and project management. This experience will increase the Port's productivity and is the ideal complement to our existing Port team."

Scholl had previously served as Special Projects Manager for the Port intermittently since 2012, writing policy documents and operation manuals as well as grant applications. Two successful grant applications to fund the Nichols Basin West Edge trail and open space development brought in over \$560,000 in total, and that project will begin construction this spring.

"I am thrilled at the prospect of working to bring greater awareness to the Port's efforts to support a healthy economy locally and throughout the Gorge," said Scholl. "As the development activities outlined in the Port's 2014-2018 Strategic Plan continue to unfold, it will be crucial to have state-of-the-art communication systems in place to support dissemination of information and encourage much needed public feedback and dialog." Scholl and her husband, Travis Erdmann, have lived in the Parkdale area since 1996 and have one son, Oscar.

CHAMBER

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ing him "the opportunity to lead this great board and great team."

Incoming president John Melesko also addressed the crowd and encouraged members to come to the board with any questions, concerns and ideas — "Come see me down at Dougs," he said — and to keep doing things for and with the Chamber.

Rep. Mark Johnson and Mayor Paul Blackburn each gave short speeches that covered key points of their respective upcoming terms. For Johnson, that included work on guidelines to protect public safety with the legalization of marijuana, and the hope that all Oregon Chambers will come together to support legislation to create a new Mount Hood license plate, the revenue from which will fund bike tourism campaigns.

"It's a pleasure to represent Hood River," he concluded.

Blackburn commented on Hood River's "awesome brand" and the three main areas stemming from the city council's recent visioning session: Obtainable housing, ongoing commitment to ecology, and a transparent government body. He was also excited about the nearly completed bathroom and bike hub facility on State Street — the last of the State Street construction project — near established downtown bike shops. (It is scheduled for completion on Feb. 22 — see page B7 for a photo of the work in progress.)

The Walker Family — Eric, Trisha and Abby, 15 —

received the Don Benton Award for their volunteer work with the chamber over the course of 2014. The New Business of the Year Award went to Laughing Mountain, a small business collective located on May Street. Member of the Year went to Aaron and Suzanne Baumbackl, owners of Solstice Wood Fire Café.

Full Sail Brewery received the Business of the Year award for the many local jobs created by the company as well as the 300-plus community organizations it regularly supports. Accepting the award on behalf of Full Sail were Lisa Merkin, Sandra Evans and Angie Walker.

The evening ended with the crowning of the prom king and queen — honors given to King Kelly Govro, of Servpro Hood River, and Queen Luann Taylor-Trotebas, Goodwill Boutique Manager — and dancing.



Photos by Trisha Walker and Chelsea Marr

AWARD winners at the Chamber's Membership Appreciation Dinner Friday were, at top, Full Sail Brewery, Business of the Year, accepted by Lisa Merkin, Sandra Evans and Angie Walker; above, Eric and Trisha Walker, Volunteers of the Year (not pictured, Abby Walker); and left, Prom Queen Luann Taylor-Trotebas, Goodwill Boutique Manager, and Prom King Kelly Govro, of Servpro.

TIMBER

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tenth of that: \$5.9 million. What each county will receive hasn't been broken down by the USDA, but County Administrator Dave Meriwether expects it won't be much at all.

"Just based on the amount for Oregon, I'm guessing it will be in the neighborhood of \$100,000 or less, but that's just ballpark," he said. "At that level, it doesn't make a lot of difference (to the county budget)."

The amount doesn't exactly come as surprise to the county, which has seen funding from the SRSA gradually dry up since the bill — co-authored by Sen. Ron Wyden — was signed into law 15 years ago. By the mid-2000s, Congress had fallen into a pattern of having to reauthorize the law on an annual basis, placing those funds in doubt as the amount disbursed has decreased over time.

Thus, come budget time each spring, the county operates as if it won't receive the money at all.

"The budget doesn't include it, so we act like it's found money when we get it," Meriwether explained.

Which isn't to say that less money doesn't impact the county, because it does. Meriwether said the majority of

the funds from the SRSA provide a boost to the public works department, allowing the county to pay for more road work that otherwise might not have gotten done. Hood River County School District also received \$204,000 from the SRSA in 2014. The News emailed Superintendent Dan Goldman to see how the money was spent, but did not receive a response by press time.

At the Hood River County Sheriff's Office, where their slice of the money is referred to by the feds as Title III funds, English said an independent budget is drawn up each year for SRSA dollars, but it's difficult to anticipate how much funding the department will receive. Last year, the U.S. government sent \$67,000 to the county, which was split evenly between HRCOS and firewise programs.

"We never know exactly how much we're going to get

until the spring," English said. "We certainly use it sparingly since we know it's finite. We've seen our Title III money drop significantly over the past several years."

"Obviously we're going to take whatever we can get because we need it," he added.

And there are strict parameters to how those funds can be used. English explained that HRCOS can only spend the money to reimburse personnel after a search, to repair and maintain equipment, and to buy equipment during a search operation. English said he was looking for ways to both find more funding and expand the way in which it is used. He noted that as more and more people come to the county to recreate, the need for search and rescue missions and the money to fund them has increased as well.

"It's an immediate need that will never go away that's only increasing in our coun-

ty," English said.

Though Hood River County has managed to do without, other counties that rely more heavily on the SRSA payments are in a worse situation. Meriwether said counties in the southwestern region of the state have been the ones most notably hit and have had to drastically cut both non-essential and essential county services.

In the Gorge, Skamania County is impacted especially hard as 80 percent of its territory is comprised of national forestland and all but 12 percent of its land is tax-exempt, according to the county's website. In October, the Skamania County Board of Commissioners passed a strongly-worded resolution declaring a state of emergency due to the economic situation. The resolution

also lambasted the federal government for its "mismanagement" of federal forests and for not creating a system that allowed for the annual reauthorization of the SRSA.

For 2015, Skamania County budgeted to receive around \$1.55 million from the SRSA and other federal forest funding, but added language to its budget resolution that the county's board "reserves the right to supplement the 2015 current expense budget to balance the lack of, or timely receipt of, these funds in order to reduce expenditures."

The Enterprise reported last week that due to the reductions in funding, Skamania County had planned to

close the Underwood Community Center, and may sell the building in order to recoup the loss. Closure of the facility was planned at the end of this week.

The future of SRSA may look grim long-term, but there is a chance of reauthorization for this year. Though the SRSA failed to make it through Congress this past fall — whose fault that was depends on which political party you talk to — both Democratic and Republican legislators, including Rep. Greg Walden, have voiced support for extending SRSA during the first quarter of 2015.

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Hood River Weather Forecast

Date	Forecast	Daytime / Overnight High / Low (°F)
Today Jan 28	Mostly Cloudy	56° / 43°
Thurs. Jan 29	Partly Cloudy	51° / 40°
Fri. Jan 30	Partly Cloudy	52° / 37°
Sat. Jan 31	Partly Cloudy	50° / 39°
Sun. Feb 1	Showers	52° / 43°
Mon. Feb 2	Rain	52° / 42°
Tues. Feb 3	Partly Cloudy	49° / 40°

Radar Weather Map

National Doppler Radar
Light RAIN Heavy Light MI

Humidity 87%
Wind Speed E 4 MPH
UV Index 1 out of 10

Actual High / Low
AGRIMET HOOD RIVER OR
Lat: 45.6842 Long: -121.5181 Elev: 510
http://uspest.org

Jan 19	- 50/37
Jan 20	- 48/33
Jan 21	- 37/30
Jan 22	- 41/34
Jan 23	- 43/36
Jan 24	- 62/39
Jan 25	- 59/41

Today's Forecast
Mostly cloudy, with a high near 46. Winds light and variable.

Updated Tuesday, Jan 27 at 10:30 a.m. PST
Data from www.weather.com

WINTER CHECKLIST
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