

Heritage program aims to fill vacancies

Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program has open commission seats

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

SALEM — The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program is looking for new commissioners with broad expertise in natural resources management to help guide the future of farmland preservation statewide.

Lawmakers created the program in 2017. It is administered by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.

However, it was not funded until earlier this year, when the Legislature allocated \$5 million for grants intended to shield agricultural land from development.

A 12-person commission — representing farming, environmental and tribal interests — reviews grant applications and makes recommendations for funding to OWEB. Commissioners, who serve four-year terms, meet several times each year.

Two commission seats are currently vacant with the retirements of Mary Wahl and Mark Bennett. A third commissioner, Ken Bailey, will be leaving when his term expires in 2023.

Replacements for Wahl and Bailey will be nominated by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and state Board of Agriculture, respectively, while Bennett's replacement is chosen directly by OWEB from applications submitted by the public.

The seat represents "natural resource values," said program coordinator Taylor Larson, which could mean someone with a background working in agriculture, timber or fisheries.

"It's sort of like our wild card seat on the commission," Larson said.

Those interested have until Monday, Oct. 31, to apply. The seat will be filled in January 2023.

Once new commissioners are appointed, the Agricultural Heritage Program will begin evaluating applications for its first round of funding.

Of the \$5 million appropriated by the Legislature, Larson said approximately \$4.3 million will be set aside for working land easements, providing matching funds for the USDA's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. Conservation easements are voluntary agreements in which organizations, such as a land trust or soil and water conservation district, buy a property's development rights, ensuring it is available for future generations to farm.

Another \$150,000 will go to helping landowners develop and implement conservation management plans that improve soil and water health.

The overall goal is to keep farms in production, while simultaneously providing co-benefits including fish and wildlife habitat.

"The purpose of the program is really to figure out how we increase the economic viability of agricultural operations, and the whole agriculture sector across the state," Larson said. "What's the future of agriculture in Oregon, and how do we set up the next generation to be successful?"

According to the USDA, Oregon lost nearly 10% of its farmland in production from 1997 to 2017. Lisa Charpillon Hanson, OWEB executive director, said the Agricultural Heritage Program was established to slow the rate of loss.

"The program provides tools to protect working lands and supports the successful transition of farmland from one farmer to the next," Hanson said. "Farm and ranch land protection also supports healthy watersheds, fish and wildlife."

For more information or to apply for the OAHF commission, visit www.oregon.gov/oweb/grants/oahp/pages/oahp.aspx.



Hanson



Larson



Umpqua Bank in Enterprise has a new manager, Luci Scott, left, shown at the branch on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2022, with banker Nick Porter, center, and teller Brittany Garret.

Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Banking on LOFTY GOALS

Union native Luci Scott takes over Umpqua Bank branch in Enterprise, eager to see bank grow

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — There's a new manager at the helm of Enterprise's branch of Umpqua Bank, but she's anything but new to banking.

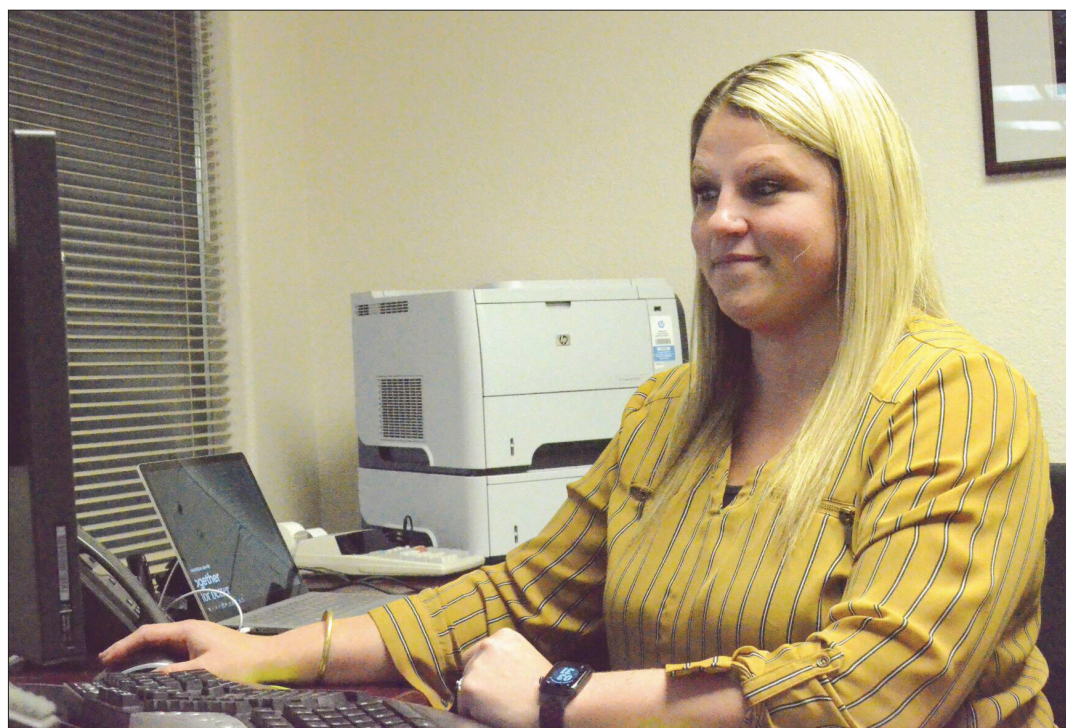
"I've been in banking for 17 years, so I guess experience," said Luci Scott of her greatest qualification for the post. "I've been doing it a while."

She replaced Mark Piper, who left in March to take a position with the Educational Service District.

Scott, who lives in Wallowa, grew up in Union and graduated from high school there. She took college classes in business at Eastern Oregon University and Blue Mountain Community College and she's still working on her bachelor's degree, which she expects to receive in business management.

"That's my ongoing educational goal," she said. "It's a slow process."

While she's the mother of a 10-year-old son, her boyfriend, Pat Salmon, has four kids. Salmon drives a log truck and is a loader operator for the Joseph-based Pro



Luci Scott, of Wallowa, works at her desk as the new branch manager at Umpqua Bank in Enterprise on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2022. She took over the post Sept. 12.

Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

UMPQUA BANK, ENTERPRISE

Who: Luci Scott, branch manager
Where: 205 W. Main St., Enterprise
Phone: 541-426-3124
Email: luciscott@umpquabank.com
Online: umpquabank.com

Thinning Inc.

Fortunate turn

Scott said it was a fortunate turn of events that got her into banking. She was about 20 when she took her

first banking job as a teller at a bank in Hermiston in 2007. She later transferred to La Grande, at what was then Sterling Bank. She was living in Elgin when her son started school and an opening came up at Community Bank there.

"So I thought what a better time than to come work in Elgin for a while," she said.

She worked there six-plus years and then heard about the job in Enterprise.

"I thought it would be fun to try something new," she said.

Scott said she then moved

to Wallowa, though her son still goes to school in Elgin because his dad lives there.

"I had no idea I was going to apply for the job," she said. "I just applied and got it."

Goals

Scott said her major goal is to rebuild trust in the bank, which currently has assets totaling \$30 billion and will increase to \$50 billion once a planned merger with Columbia Bank comes through.

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Local business celebrates 40 years in the valley



Rick Gately, left, and David Gately stand side by side in their store, La Grande Gold and Silver, 2212 Island Ave., in this undated photo. In September 2022 the owners marked 40 years of business in the same location.

Rick Gately/Contributed Photo

La Grande Gold and Silver opened its doors in 1982

By **ISABELLA CROWLEY**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — There were five jewelry stores in La Grande in September 1982 when Rick Gately and Darwin Harris first opened the doors of their business — 40 years later, La Grande Gold and Silver is the only full-service jewelry and coin/bullion store in the Grande Ronde Valley.

"We saw the value of having one in our area," Gately said.

The business has operated out of the same location, at 2212 Island Ave., since the very beginning. Thirty years ago, the building was remodeled and the physical location of the store shifted, but La Grande Gold and Silver has kept the same address for all 40 years.

The jewelry store differentiated itself

by offering a variety of goods. The pair sold traditional pieces like wedding bands and gold or silver jewelry, but also brought in newer styles and pieces that were gaining in popularity, like Black Hills Gold and chains. They also sold coins and estate jewelry.

La Grande Gold and Silver has the same wide variety of offerings to this day, said Gately. Customers can also invest in the precious metals market at the store, have jewelry repaired and shop for gifts such as clocks and jewelry boxes.

"We cover a broad spectrum," Gately said.

Harris died 10 years after the pair opened shop, but the Harris family remained invested in the business for years to come, Gately said. Eventually,

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