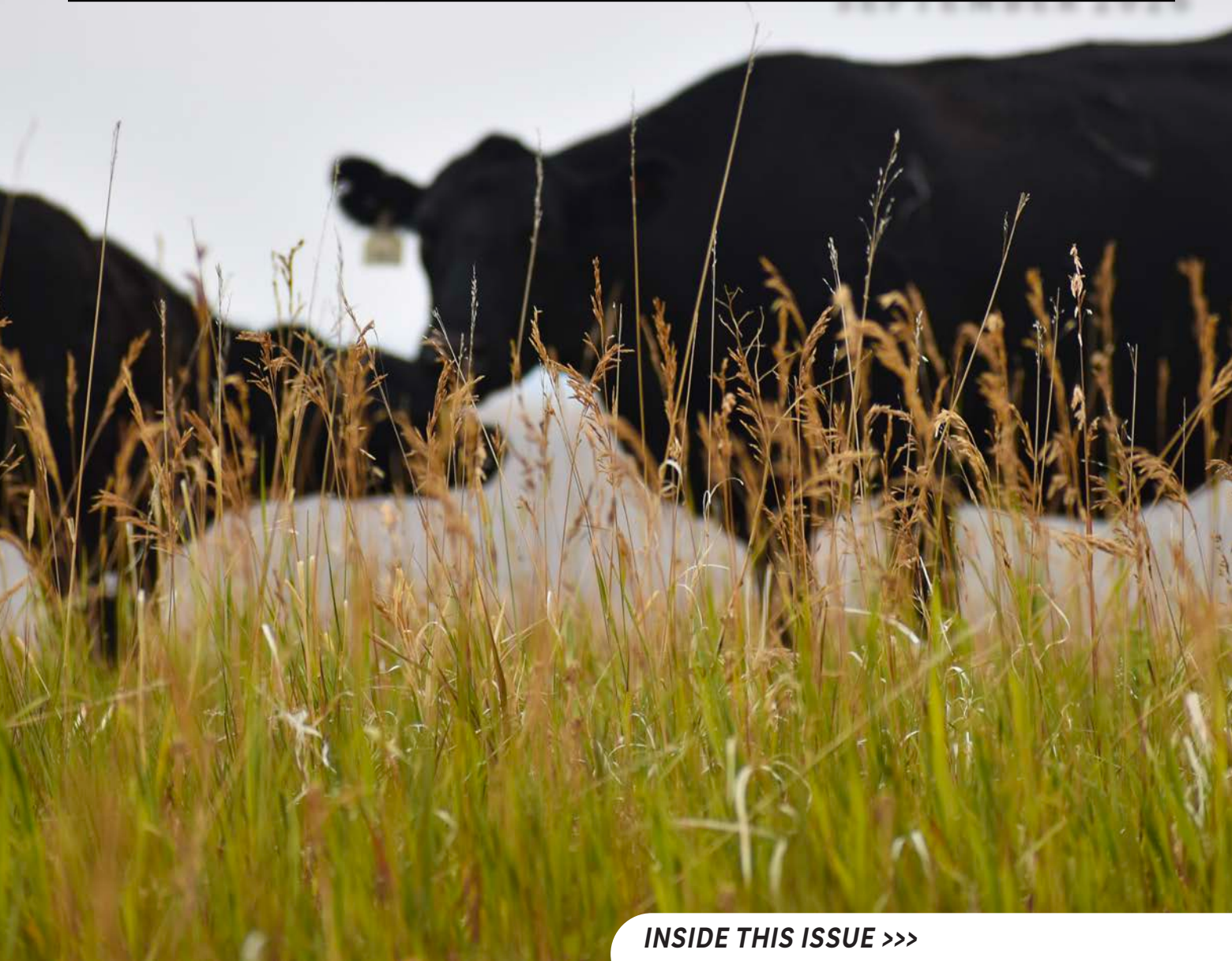


OREGON CATTLEMAN

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE OREGON CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 2026



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DIRECTOR RYAN KRABILL**

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Photographed by Sadie Kennedy,
Allen Canyon Cattle, Wallowa
County, Oregon

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TODAY! 20**

**POST-FIRE
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RANGELANDS 30**



Welcome, Executive Director Krabill!

Diana Wirth | 541-891-2295
OCA President

OCA's incoming Executive Director, Ryan Krabill, brings a deep well of experience to our organization – from his work in Washington, D.C. at USDA, to his leadership at the Potato Commission, to his service here in Oregon as Government Affairs Manager for the Oregon Farm Bureau. What stands out most about Ryan is his unwavering commitment to ethics and accountability. His dedication to serving agriculture and the ranching community is genuine and unmistakable.

Ryan officially steps into his role on September 9, and I can say without hesitation that I'm truly looking forward to the day he joins our team. Please be sure to read his bio in this month's edition.

LEADERSHIP

On August 14, I traveled north—despite a Level 2 evacuation notice and no small amount of hesitation—to attend the Wallowa Stockgrowers meeting. I'm grateful I made the trip. Watching a new leadership team step forward in service to Oregon's ranching community was truly an honor. Congratulations to President Rawley Bigsby and his team; we wish them every success as they begin their work.

I also want to extend sincere thanks to John Williams, OCA Wolf Committee Chair, for his steady leadership and commitment to the Wallowa County Stockgrowers. He graciously served as president this past year to help guide and support the transition to this new team. Well done, John — your dedication made a difference.

THE WORST FIRE YEAR IN OREGON HISTORY

At the time of this writing, more than 2.5 million acres have burned across Oregon, surpassing the previous record of 2.1 million acres set in 2024. For ranchers, fire isn't an abstract threat — it's a daily concern. The signs are impossible to ignore, and the dangers even more so.

In rural communities, our Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPA) remain the first line of defense when rangeland fires ignite. In Malheur and Harney Counties this summer, they were often the only line of defense. Their work underscores a hard truth: Oregon's fire suppression protocols need serious, lasting reform.

A CALL FOR REAL CHANGE

Recent conversations around wildfire management have been deeply concerning. While no one wants to “fan the flames,” Oregon's stakeholders, legislators, and fire agencies must confront the gaps in current wildfire response and forest management. That includes:

- Reinvesting in logging infrastructure
- Reevaluating wildland fire protocols
- Addressing ESA related management barriers

OCA will be at the table for these discussions — and we intend to push for tangible, durable change.

Please consider supporting your local RFPA and the OCA Wildfire Relief Assistance Fund. Your contributions directly strengthen frontline capacity.

CONTINUED PAGE 8...





Announcing the new vaccine from Hygieia Labs:

Your Foothold Against Foothill Abortion.



Costing the industry more than \$10 million annually, Foothill Abortion — formally known as Epizootic Bovine Abortion, or EBA — has robbed profits from ranchers for almost 100 years as the leading cause of calf loss in affected areas of the Western United States.

Until now.

After years in development and testing, the new Foothill Abortion Vaccine is available from Hygieia Biological Laboratories. The Foothill Abortion Vaccine has been shown to protect more than 95% of animals from the disease when administered as directed. Administration is safe, simple and proven to give your heifers a strong start for greater productivity.

Protect your investment and promote your profitability. Ask your local veterinarian if the Foothill Abortion Vaccine is right for your herd, or contact Hygieia Labs to learn more.

Contact Jenna Chandler at Hygieia Labs for additional information.

Jenna Chandler, EBA Product Manager
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GRIZZLY BEAR4(D) RULE: OCA'S POSITION

OCA recently submitted comments on the proposed changes to the ESA 4(d) rule. Under the current “blanket rule,” all threatened species are automatically treated as endangered, leaving states with very limited management options. None of us want to see grizzly bear expansion, but Oregon must be prepared for it. State management can be an important tool—yet it is only meaningful if the species is delisted, because federal restrictions otherwise continue to override state authority.

While wolves present their own challenges, large bears pose immediate risks to human safety. For that reason, OCA supports both delisting and the proposed updates to the 4(d) rule, which together provide a more practical and responsible path forward.

CAFO PERMIT LAWSUIT: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

On July 14, 2026, four environmental and food advocacy groups — Willamette Riverkeeper, Food & Water Watch, Center for Food Safety, and the Animal Legal Defense Fund — filed a lawsuit against the Oregon Department of Agriculture, challenging Oregon's new CAFO(Confined Animal Feeding Operation) NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) General Permit #01 2026.



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WHAT THE PERMIT DOES

- Regulates 300+ CAFOs under the Clean Water Act and Oregon water quality laws
- Replaces the expired 2016 permit
- Sets standards for manure storage, wastewater management, nutrient limits, inspections, reporting, and groundwater protection

STATE'S RESPONSE

ODA and DEQ maintain the permit meets all legal requirements, underwent extensive public comment, and fits Oregon's established CAFO regulatory framework. The state is ready to defend the permit.

OCA'S RESPONSE

The lawsuit is clearly part of a broader campaign to restrict modern animal agriculture. The Oregon Cattlemen's Association will remain fully engaged. OCA submitted formal comments supporting renewal of the permit, reinforcing our position that Oregon's stringent permitting system is more than adequate. Maintaining this infrastructure is essential to sustaining dairies, animal-feeding operations, on-site slaughter facilities, auction yards, and many other businesses in our state. Other lawsuits have been filed in other western states.

Oregon's livestock producers know what it takes to feed this nation, and our industry must be safeguarded from outside groups that lack that understanding. The Oregon Cattlemen's Association Board of Directors has voted to intervene in this lawsuit, joining several key Allied Industry partners. We will not stand by while others attempt to undermine the people who provide America's food supply.

THE BOTTOM LINE

I'd like to invite you to join us at the OCA Fall Quarterly in Prineville and at our Cattle PAC event on September 24 in Powell Butte. Each year, we come together to raise critical funds for legislators who stand with Oregon's ranching families in Salem. Your registration serves as a direct contribution and is tax deductible; a meaningful way to invest in the future of your own operation. Registration information is available in this month's edition and on our website.

Oregon's ranching community is facing historic wildfire conditions, evolving wildlife management pressures, and increasing regulatory scrutiny. Through it all, OCA remains committed to strong advocacy, practical solutions, and defending the future of Oregon's livestock producers. We need engaged members and supportive legislators who understand what's at stake. Thank you for being part of the team-see you in Powell Butte! DRW •

THOMAS

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Boyd Bedrock x Connealy Clarity

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7 -.6 80 144 32 1.22 .89 84 221 369



THOMAS PROLIFIC 5715 | AAA# 21550540
Ellingson Prolific x HCC Whitewater 9010

CED BW WW YW Milk Marb RE \$G \$B \$C
5 1.5 91 164 22 1.26 1.18 90 263 406



THOMAS LUCY 1162 | AAA# 20287088
Connealy Clarity x K C F Bennett Fortress

CED BW WW YW Milk Marb RE \$G \$B \$C
7 1.1 77 135 37 .78 1.38 75 192 349



THOMAS LUCY 3510 | AAA# 21000714
HCC Whitewater 9010 x Poss Rawhide

CED BW WW YW Milk Marb RE \$G \$B \$C
21 -5.2 58 110 31 1.35 1.27 93 227 355



THOMAS BLACKBIRD 5263 | AAA# 21451006
BNWZ Validity 2491 x Connealy Clarity

CED BW WW YW Milk Marb RE \$G \$B \$C
17 -1.0 68 122 28 1.56 1.11 108 232 385



THOMAS JUANA ERICA 5435 | AAA# 21453922
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Fall Brings a Different Kind of New Beginning

Rocky Dallum

OCA Lobbyist

Hopefully, by the time you open this magazine, Oregon's wildfire season will be behind us. This year has hit our state and some of you particularly hard. First and foremost, I hope for safety and recovery for everyone whose home, ranch, livestock, or community has been affected—this year or in years past. Public policy can seem somewhat trivial compared with the urgency and devastation of a fire bearing down on your property. Still, our work is inspired and empowered every summer by the stories we hear about ranchers coming together to protect one another, help families facing fire, move and shelter livestock, and do whatever is needed for your communities during times of crisis and loss.

As fire season winds down, fall brings a different kind of new beginning. The political and policy cycle is just beginning. Legislative concepts are being developed, legislators are submitting drafting requests, and the legislative lawyers will start drafting bills for the 2027 session. Meanwhile, October takes us to the height of campaign season. November will reveal which new faces—and which familiar faces in new seats—will arrive in Salem in January to be sworn and start the hard work of the long Legislative Session.

OCA's policy agenda for 2027 is shaped by current events, our members' priorities, and, of course, the proposals brought forth by others. Wildfire will remain near the top of OCA's policy agenda. We are coordinating with the forestry, land-management, and wildfire communities as proposals take shape for the next session. Those discussions include how Oregon continues to pay for wildfire prevention and response, as well as suppression strategies that better protect our ranchers—particularly those operating on unprotected or under-protected lands. As we've learned in the past, without better solutions and preparation, ranchers can be left paying a disproportionate share of costs for fighting fires. OCA will continue working to make sure ranchers have a

voice as we navigate responses to this fire season and prepare for the future of wildfire mitigation, suppression, and funding.

OCA is also independently initiating other legislative work. We are educating legislators about the regulatory programs that govern Oregon agriculture and the investments producers make to comply. We are reviewing the federal and USDA landscape for labeling cell-cultivated and other alternative meat products. Federal labeling rules remain incomplete, and we are considering what Oregon can and should do to protect consumers, preserve honest labeling, and defend the beef industry in alignment with federal law. Across the broader agricultural community, organizations are developing strategies as legal organizations bring new proposals regulating farm labor, putting agricultural jobs at risk and creating compliance and legal challenges for farmers and ranchers. As is typical every session, we expect extensive debates over bills on water quality, water quantity, and wildlife management. Campaign season is an excellent time to educate candidates on these issues and seek their commitment to support us next year.

Campaign season and the looming legislative session also mean candidates will share their messages and ideas with you, filling your screens, mailboxes, and airwaves. The governor's race features two familiar candidates in Tina Kotek and Christine Drazan fighting for your attention and support. Governor Tina Kotek is working to tie Christine Drazan to President Trump and a national Republican brand that pollsters see as unpopular with many Oregon voters. Drazan, meanwhile, wants the election to focus on the direction of the state, challenges for consumers and businesses, the performance of state government, or schools and the need for greater accountability. Oregon voters are frustrated about affordability, homelessness, public safety, and government performance, and

pollsters report that Kotek's approval rating, like the Trump administration's, is also underwater. Still, Oregonians have not elected a Republican for Governor in decades. The themes that emerge during this phase of the Governor's race will likely shape the agenda in Salem in 2027. Certainly, if Drazen were to win, it would significantly change the political dynamics and operation of state government in our state.

Legislative races will matter just as much to OCA's advocacy work as the rest of the ballot, as we work every day with our state Senators and Representatives. Democrats are unlikely to relinquish their grip on power in the State Capitol, but the margins matter. Both parties will invest heavily to gain any advantage they can this cycle. Republicans' best shot to undermine Democrats' supermajorities may be in the Senate, where only one seat would have to flip. Many political observers are watching the race in Senate District 3 in the Rogue Valley. Republicans are also working to hold not a few vacant seats they currently control in the Columbia Gorge, the Willamette Valley, and on the North Coast. On the House side, retirements and other vacancies have created consequential races in many of the same regions, including the North Coast, the Gorge and Clackamas County. A handful of outcomes could shape committee leadership, caucus priorities and the balance of power when the Legislature convenes early next year.

The OCA team has met or spoken with most of the candidates in these key races as well as incoming candidates we expect to win. We have a good sense of who understands agriculture, who is willing to learn, and who could become a genuine champion for ranching and natural resources. Candidates also continue to call OCA and CattlePAC for support. Those conversations matter. Political contributions are one tool, but the greater value comes from building relationships early, asking direct questions, and helping candidates understand how decisions made in Salem affect ranch families and rural communities.

OCA is also active in the courts, fighting to protect our feedlots. This summer, animal rights activists and environmental organizations sued the state to challenge what is already the nation's strongest water quality program – a permit that many livestock operations (feedlots, dairies, poultry farms) rely on. We are working with other livestock organizations to intervene in the case so that producers have a seat at the table in legal proceedings. Our feedlot members invest substantial time and resources to comply with Oregon's already rigorous requirements for nutrient management, manure and wastewater

storage, inspections, recordkeeping, and agency oversight. They need the permit, and it should not be unnecessarily complicated, nor should their operations be unnecessarily burdened by extremists using lawsuits to threaten the beef industry. Our feedlots work hard to ensure their operations are compliant with water quality laws, and OCA will continue defending the integrity of our members and the existing program.

Over the next several months, there will be plenty of candidate mail, campaign advertisements, and promises, all of which will ultimately evolve into policy debates in Salem next year. I encourage every OCA member to do your due diligence. Ask candidates where they stand. Urge them to support ranching, natural resources, and the Oregon businesses and industries that keep rural communities strong. Share your experience, invite them to your ranch, and hold them accountable for their answers. Most importantly, when ballots arrive in October, vote. The candidates elected this fall will make decisions affecting Oregon agriculture for years to come. OCA's relationship with them is key, and your voice shapes their decisions and our collective work in the Capitol. •

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Oregon Cattlemen's



OCA selected three scholarship award recipients for the 2026-2027 academic year. Applicants are sophomore status or higher enrolled in a community college or university with a focus and dedication to improving agriculture.



Clancey Krahm

I am deeply honored to be selected as a recipient of the 2026 Oregon Cattlemen's Stewardship Fund Scholarship. Thank you for your generous investment in my education and for supporting the next generation of Oregon's agricultural leaders.

Receiving this scholarship is both a financial blessing and an incredible encouragement as I continue pursuing my education and career in agriculture. Growing up in Oregon agriculture has instilled in me a deep appreciation for responsible stewardship, hard work, and service to our rural communities. Your confidence in students like me inspires me to continue working toward a future where I can advocate for and strengthen our state's livestock industry.

I sincerely appreciate your commitment to supporting students who are passionate about agriculture and dedicated to preserving the values that make Oregon's cattle industry so strong. Your generosity will have a lasting impact on my educational journey and future career.

Thank you again for this incredible honor and for investing in my future. I am truly grateful for your support.

My name is Bayli Ladner, and I am currently pursuing a degree in Animal Science with an emphasis in Nutrition at Kansas State University while competing as a student-athlete on the Kansas State Rodeo Team. Originally from Klamath Falls, Oregon, I was raised on my family's ranch where I developed a deep appreciation for the cattle industry and the values that define agriculture, hard work, stewardship, and service. My involvement in agriculture began at an early age through daily livestock responsibilities and continued through years of participation in 4-H, FFA, and rodeo. These experiences provided opportunities to develop leadership skills, advocate for agriculture, and build a strong foundation in animal science. Throughout high school, I served in leadership positions within Oregon High School Rodeo and remained active in agricultural education and community outreach efforts.

Looking ahead, my goal is to build a career in beef cattle nutrition and contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of the cattle industry. I hope to work as a feedlot nutritionist, developing practical, research-based nutrition programs that improve animal performance, herd health, and production efficiency. I am passionate about helping producers make informed management decisions while continuing to promote and strengthen the future of agriculture. As I continue my education, I remain committed to representing Oregon agriculture with professionalism and carrying forward the values and traditions that have shaped both my upbringing and future goals.



Bayli Ladner

Scholarship Recipients



Cydney Stables

Growing up in Gaston, Oregon, I was actively involved in my family's diversified agricultural operation, which produces and markets greenhouse and nursery products direct-to-consumer through farmers' markets and a roadside stand. The operation also includes hay production and livestock enterprises, including dairy cattle, meat goats, and poultry. My involvement in agriculture began at an early age through 4-H and FFA, where I served in leadership roles at the club, chapter, and state levels.

I earned my undergraduate degrees from Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa, where I competed on the collegiate women's basketball and golf teams. In addition to athletics, I was actively involved in the Agricultural Business Club, serving as president for three years. I graduated summa cum laude with bachelor's degrees in Agricultural Business, Business Administration, Communications, and Economics, along with a minor in Plant and Animal Sciences.

After graduation, I served as the 66th Oregon Dairy Princess Ambassador, traveling throughout the state to educate consumers, students, and industry stakeholders about the dairy industry. This role further inspired my interest in careers focused on education and serving agricultural communities.

Currently, I am a master's student in Agricultural Economics at Kansas State University. My research focuses on direct-to-consumer beef sales and evaluating beef-on-dairy crossbreeding metrics for Midwestern feedlots. Through this work, I aim to contribute practical economic insights that support agricultural producers and industry stakeholders.

Following completion of my master's degree, I plan to pursue a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics. My long-term career goals include serving as an Extension educator, college professor, or agricultural economist within the agribusiness sector, where I can combine research, education, and industry engagement to support informed decision-making and strengthen the long-term sustainability and profitability of agricultural operations.

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2026 Nomination Process is Open

In accordance with the responsibilities outlined in our association's governing documents, it is time to open the nominations process.

List of the office positions open for nomination and, per our bylaws, required qualifications of those candidates are as follows:

POSITIONS TO BE NOMINATED IN 2026:

- District III - Randy Mills serving, eligible to run again
- District IV - Bobbi Aldridge serving, eligible to run again
- District V - Randy White serving, not eligible- position needs to be filled
- District VI - Jim Sly serving, not eligible- position needs to be filled
- OCA Treasurer - Andy VanderPlaat serving, eligible but would like to step down

ARTICLE VII:

Nominations. Article VII of OCA's adopted Bylaws prescribes in detail the rules, eligibility, and process for OCA office nominations. "Each nominee for Association office must be a Producer level member qualified to hold the particular office and in good standing."

Section e. Candidates may be dropped, but none may be added after publication of the

report of the Nominating Committee to the Board of Directors at the Fall Quarterly meeting: additions may be made by nominations from the floor at the Annual Convention.

Section f. At the general Membership meeting at the Annual Convention, the Nominating Committee will place the slate of candidates into nomination. (Immediately after the action, the chair will call for nominations from the floor.)

NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES FOR DISTRICT VICE PRESIDENT

(Article VII Section 4) Paragraph a: "The nominee or nominees for each office of District Vice President will be chosen from the candidates selected by the affiliated county associations within each District and submitted by the current District Vice President in a timely manner to the Nominating Committee." And, per Article VII Section 4 Paragraph b: "If no candidates are selected and submitted by the affiliated county associations within each District in a timely manner, the Nominating Committee will select a candidate or candidates for that office."

NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES FOR TREASURER. (ARTICLE VII SECTION 5)

"Treasurer candidates are nominated for a one-year term of office and may be nominated for additional terms."

NOMINATION

If you are aware of an individual who would be an exemplary candidate for one of the positions above or are interested yourself, please contact your area Vice President or the Nominating Committee Chair, Matt McElligott, lmLivestocknp@gmail.com. All candidate names must be submitted no later than August 20, 2026. •



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From Behind the Booth to the Board Table: A Decade with the Oregon Cattlemen's Association

Briana Wimber

Past OCA Vice President at Large

My involvement with the Oregon Cattlemen's Association started about ten years ago, the way many relationships in agriculture do—standing behind an insurance booth at Cattlemen's events, having practical conversations in the aisles between meetings, sales, and the next thing on everyone's calendar. I wasn't there just to talk coverage; I was there to listen. And cattlemen are exceptional teachers.

From the exhibitor side, you gain a unique vantage point. You see producers balancing genetics, weather, labor, markets, regulations, and equipment that inevitably chooses the worst possible moment to fail. You learn quickly that agriculture requires people to be deeply knowledgeable across many disciplines, fiercely independent, and almost universally short on time. Conversations are direct, efficient, and grounded in real experience—if you don't understand their world, you won't be behind that booth very long.

Early on, it became clear that the Oregon Cattlemen's Association is far more than an annual event or a logo on a banner. It is the connective tissue of a very busy industry. While producers focus

on their operations, OCA works quietly in the background—engaging in policy discussions, advocating in Salem, building relationships, and ensuring the industry's voice is both informed and heard.

Over time, my role evolved. What began as event participation and membership support grew into deeper involvement, eventually leading to six years of board service. That transition didn't happen because I suddenly had extra hours in the day—anyone in agriculture knows that's not how it works—but because I came to understand how critical membership work truly is. In this industry, “someone else will handle it” usually means another producer or advocate who is already stretched thin.

Serving on the board reinforced what I had first observed from behind the booth: membership matters most in industries where people don't have time to spare. The strength of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association comes from producers and partners who choose to engage anyway—who recognize that if we don't participate, decisions will still be made, just without the benefit of on-the-ground experience.

As an insurance professional, I spend my days focused on protection, planning, and long-term sustainability. My decade with OCA has shown me that membership work is its own form of risk management—protecting not just individual operations, but the future of Oregon's cattle industry.

Ten years in, including six years serving on the board, I'm grateful that what started behind a booth turned into a meaningful seat at the table. In agriculture, showing up matters—and sometimes, it's the most important work we do.

Sincerely yours,

Breanna Wimber, Past Vice President At Large OCA •

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Welcome Ryan Krabill, OCA's New Executive Director

It is a tremendous honor to take this moment to introduce myself as the incoming Executive Director of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association. I am grateful for the confidence placed in me, and I am excited for the opportunity to serve OCA and its members. Throughout the selection process, one thing became abundantly clear: OCA's greatest strength is its people. The passion, integrity, commitment, and legacy of Oregon's cattle producers are what make this organization so important, and I look forward to earning your trust as we work together to build an even stronger future.

Although my career has taken me across the country, I have always considered Oregon home. I am a native Oregonian who grew up on a small farm in the mid-Willamette Valley, where I developed an appreciation for responsibility, hard work, and the importance of strong rural communities. Those early experiences shaped my values and ultimately inspired a career dedicated to serving American agriculture.

Over the past two decades, I have been fortunate to serve from a variety of perspectives. I began my public service career with the U.S. Department of Agriculture during the Bush Administration, serving in the Office of the Secretary. From there, I spent nearly a decade representing the nation's potato industry—first with the industry's trade association in Washington, D.C., followed by the industry's checkoff program in Denver. In those roles, I worked alongside a diverse group of growers, researchers, and industry leaders to advance public policy, research, and strategic initiatives. Most recently in my role at the Oregon Farm Bureau, I collaborated with producers, commodity organizations, elected officials, and state and federal agencies while advocating on issues affecting Oregon agriculture in both Salem and our nation's capital.

Looking back, each chapter of my career has prepared me for the next. Taken together, these experiences have reinforced a simple belief that has guided my career: agriculture is strongest when producers have a unified, respected, and trusted voice. Every role I have held has been centered on



helping agricultural producers succeed, and I cannot think of a more meaningful opportunity than applying those experiences in service to Oregon's cattle industry.

One theme that emerged during the selection process was the opportunity to continue strengthening OCA as an organization. I believe we have a tremendous opportunity to do just that by growing membership, investing in communication, and continuing to elevate OCA's voice. Strong associations create opportunities that individual producers cannot achieve alone.

They build relationships, advocate effectively, steward resources responsibly, and create value that benefits every member. I believe OCA is favorably positioned to do all of those things, and I am excited to be an active part of its next chapter.

As I begin this role, my first priority will be to listen. Oregon's cattle industry is incredibly diverse, and I want to better understand the perspectives, priorities, and challenges facing producers in every region of the state. I look forward to attending county meetings, visiting ranches, participating in industry events, and spending time learning directly from members. Of course, if you're ever in Salem, please stop by to say hello!

Outside of work, my greatest source of pride is my family. My wife, Elizabeth, and I are raising our two children, Cannon and Cassidy, in Albany, just a few miles from where I grew up. Our home is also kept lively by two rescue dogs—Turner, a ten-year-old Labrador mix, and Hazel, a five-year-old Australian cattle dog who has an endless supply of energy, much to Turner's chagrin.

I am so thankful for the warm welcome to OCA that I have already received and am humbled by the opportunity to serve as your Executive Director. Together, I am confident we can continue strengthening the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, growing its membership, and ensuring that Oregon's cattle industry remains strong, respected, and successful for generations to come.

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Farm Raised, Subaru Driven

Isaac Insko

Chief of Staff, Oregon House of Representatives

I grew up on Sandridge, just outside La Grande, in the Grande Ronde Valley. It was a normal farm-kid childhood: early mornings, dusty clothes, broken equipment, and more than a few jobs I tried to talk my way out of. At the time, I probably did not think much of it. It was just life. But looking back, that is where I learned the basics that have stuck with me: show up, work hard, do what you say you will do, and take care of the people and places that take care of you.

I was lucky to grow up working alongside my siblings, Noah, Ella, and Austin. We learned the way farm kids do: someone handed us a job, and we quickly figured out that complaining did not make it go any faster. Noah and Austin made the work lighter, or at least more entertaining. Ella somehow always seemed to get a little special treatment. She may deny it, but the rest of us know the truth—or at least the version we are sticking with. Noah still keeps me humble. These days he likes to make fun of my Subaru Crosstrek and tells me I have soft hands now that I work in the Capitol. He is probably not entirely wrong, but I would like to think I can still remember how to do a little real work when I have to.

My dad always told us he wanted us to know we could leave the farm and try new careers if

that was where life took us. He wanted us to feel supported and to know there was more than one good way to build a life. Then, after I actually left, he called me and said, “You know, when I said you could leave, I was just trying to be supportive. I didn’t really mean it.” That pretty well sums up our family: supportive, honest, and never too far from giving each other a hard time.

Those days mean more to me now than they probably did then. The farm taught me patience and humility; values rooted in community and family that I carry with me. It showed me that rural communities depend on people willing to step up when needed, which I hope to honor through my future service.

That is the perspective I carried with me when my path led to the Oregon Legislature. Serving as a Chief of Staff in the Oregon House and Senate was not something I pictured when I was younger, but it became one of the most meaningful experiences of my life. Salem can feel a long way from La Grande. Hence the need for a fuel-efficient Subaru. Still, I never forgot where I came from. Every time rural Oregon comes up in a meeting, I think about the families, ranchers, and small communities back home who live with the consequences of decisions made at the Capitol.

One of the greatest privileges of this work has been serving with Todd Nash, a former Oregon Cattlemen’s president and now a State Senator. Todd has shaped me more than I can probably put into words. He leads with common sense, conviction, and a deep love for rural Oregon. He has shown me that public service is not about chasing attention. It is about listening, doing the homework, keeping your word, and standing up for the people who sent you there. I’ve watched him walk into difficult conversations with respect for everyone at the table, but with a clear understanding of what rural communities need. That example stayed with me. It reminds me of what I first learned at home: leadership does not always have to be loud. Sometimes it is steady, patient, and rooted in knowing exactly who you are.

I have also been grateful for the chance to work directly with the Oregon Cattlemen on issues that matter to producers across the state. During the 2025 Legislative Session, I worked with them on HB 3940, a wildfire bill that became law and addressed issues such as wildfire funding, forest protection costs, and rural fire protection. In the 2026 short session, I helped on SB 1539, which passed and allows trained individuals to verify whether cattle are pregnant under

certain circumstances without holding a veterinary license. Those were never abstract policy fights for me. They were about practical tools for people doing real work on the ground. I knew the people behind those issues. I knew what it meant when a bill helped a rancher plan better, manage costs, or keep an operation moving. I am excited to work with Oregon Cattlemen again on a meat labelling bill, because consumers deserve honesty and producers deserve a fair marketplace for the products they raise with care.

Now I am preparing for a new chapter: earning my law degree. My goal is to return home to La Grande and serve as a prosecutor in the community that raised me. That calling feels personal. I want to bring fairness, good judgment, and a deep understanding of home into a role that affects families and the trust people place in the justice system. When I think about the road ahead, I think less about titles and more about the people who shaped me: my family, the long days that taught us how to work together, Todd Nash's steady example, and the rural community that has always had my back.

My journey has taken me from the farm to the Capitol, and now toward law school. I do not know exactly what every step ahead will look like, but I know the place I am working my way back to. La Grande, agriculture, and the people who believed in me are still the foundation of everything I hope to do. And if Noah is reading this, yes, I may drive a Subaru Crosstrek now, and maybe my hands are a little softer than they used to be. But I am still coming home, and I plan to use those hands to work hard for the community that raised us. Let's be honest: you're going to need a good lawyer! •

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We Want to Hear from Oregon Cattle Producers

**Yu Lu and Curtis Martin, in collaboration
with Oregon Beef Council**



Oregon cattle producers make decisions every day around forage, water, heat, markets, labor, and the day-to-day realities of keeping an operation running. Across Oregon, many producers are again dealing with dry conditions, heat, forage pressure, and water uncertainty this summer, although the situation varies by region and by operation. That is why we invite cattle producers across the state to participate in a short survey. Our goal is simple: to hear directly from producers so future research, outreach, and producer resources better reflect what matters most on Oregon operations.

If you raise cattle in Oregon or help make management decisions on a ranch, your perspective matters. We want to hear from owners, managers, family members, and others involved in day-to-day decisions on beef operations of all types and sizes. Strong participation helps us build a clearer picture of what producers are seeing on the ground and where future work can be more useful.

The survey asks about challenges many producers are already managing, including drought and water availability, heat, wildfire, market pressure, grazing and pasture management, and feed and forage decisions. It also asks where producers turn for useful information when conditions are changing.

In addition, the survey asks about tools and technologies producers may or may not be using, including weather-related tools, grazing or pasture management tools, virtual fencing, and business or market information. We also want to understand the practical barriers that may make these tools difficult to access or use.

We are grateful to the Oregon ranchers and agricultural professionals who provided feedback as the survey was developed. Their input helped us

make the questions clearer and more relevant to the decisions cattle producers face.

We know ranchers are busy, and no one wants to deal with a long or inconvenient survey. This survey is designed to take about 15 to 20 minutes. Participation is voluntary, responses are confidential, and after completing the survey, participants may choose to enter a drawing for one of ten \$100 cash vouchers.

The survey can be completed on a phone or computer. To participate, scan the QR code on the righthand page of this article or visit the short survey link:

<https://beav.es/YGF>

Questions may be directed to Yu Lu at yu.lu@oregonstate.edu.

The more we hear from cattle producers across Oregon, the better we can understand what is working, what is getting harder, and where future research and outreach can be more practical and relevant. If another producer or ranch decision-maker on your operation should take the survey, please feel free to share it with them.

Thank you for considering this request and for the work you do every day to support Oregon's cattle industry and rural communities.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Yu Lu is an Assistant Professor of Practice in Human Dimensions of Agricultural Water Management at Oregon State University.

Curtis Martin is a cattle producer and a member of the Oregon Beef Council. •



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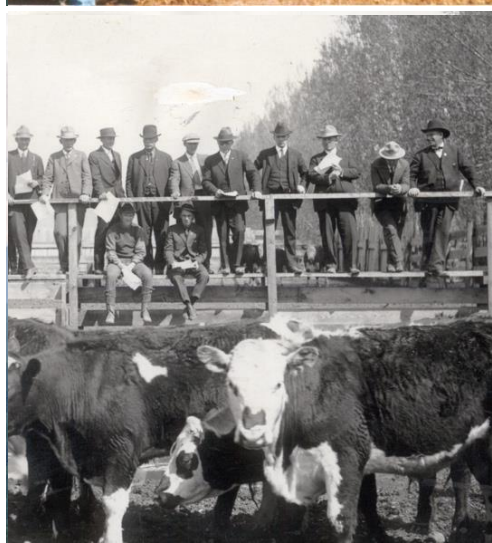
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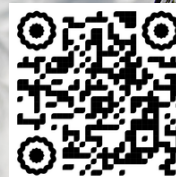
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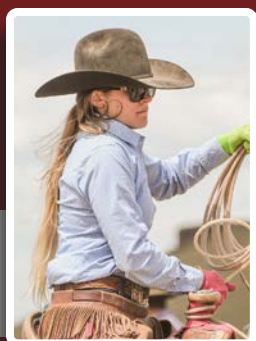
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Questions? Contact Jem Connelly, Member Services Manager at (503) 361-8941 or jem.connelly@orcattle.com



When the Smoke Rises, Ranchers Show Up

Morgan Kromm | 805-801-9960
OCW President | orcattlewomen@gmail.com



A particular kind of exhaustion comes after spending hours on a fire. Your clothes smell like smoke, your face is covered in dust, and it can be difficult to remember the last time you ate or how much sleep you have missed. Yet when another engine appears through the haze carrying neighbors who have left their own ranches to help protect someone else's, you find enough energy to keep going. This summer, I have been reminded again and again that when fires start around ranch country, the farmers and ranchers show up.

They arrive in fire engines and water tenders maintained by local Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, and they bring loaders, dozers, tractors, stock trailers, fuel tanks, tools, and whatever else might be useful. Most importantly, they bring an understanding of the country that cannot be learned from a map. They know which roads lead somewhere and which ones do not, where water can be found, where livestock are likely to be, and which two-track might offer a way around the fire. They understand how the

wind moves through a particular canyon and how quickly dry grass can carry flames across open country. RFPAs provide training, equipment, organization, and agency coordination that allow ranchers to put their local knowledge to work during a wildfire, but at their core, they are a formal version of something ranching communities have always done: help their neighbors.

When fire threatens a ranch, the people responding are often putting their own operations on hold. Their livestock still needs checked, hay still needs put up, fences still need repaired, and their own property may be every bit as dry and vulnerable as the land they are helping defend. Still, they go. That willingness to serve is one of the cattle industry's greatest strengths, and I wish more people outside of agriculture could witness it firsthand. The people on those engines are not there because they have nothing else to do. They are there because someone needs help, and they understand that the next fire could just as easily be headed toward their own home or cattle.

When the public hears that a fire has burned thousands (or hundreds of thousands) of acres, it can be difficult to understand what those numbers really mean. An acre is easy to treat as a statistic, but to a ranching family, that land represents forage,



fences, water developments, wildlife habitat, livestock, years of careful stewardship, and often generations of family history. When those acres burn, the loss does not end when the fire is contained. Ranchers may be left with miles of destroyed fence, damaged water systems, displaced cattle, lost grazing, erosion concerns, and an immediate need for hay or alternative pasture. The news coverage eventually moves on, but the work of recovering from a wildfire may continue for months or even years.

CattleWomen play an important part in both the immediate response and the recovery that follows. Women in our industry operate equipment, drive engines and water tenders, move cattle, deliver fuel and supplies, and work directly on the Fireline. They are also keeping ranches and families going while others are away. They check livestock, rearrange ranch work, prepare meals, answer phones, coordinate donations, share reliable information, and make sure important details are not overlooked in the middle of an emergency. Some of those contributions are highly visible, while many happen quietly behind the scenes, but all of them are necessary. As president of Oregon CattleWomen and as a board member of my local RFPA, I am proud of how willing the women in our industry are to step into whatever role is needed.

I am equally proud of the way our entire agricultural community responds during difficult moments. I have seen exhausted people continue working for days straight on no sleep because someone's home, cattle, or winter feed was still in danger. I have watched businesses and individuals donate food, water, fuel, equipment, and money, and I have seen people pray for

firefighters and ranching families they may never meet. Those acts of generosity are an important part of the story, but so is the preparation that takes place long before anyone sees smoke. RFPA members attend training, maintain equipment, replace tires, test radios, organize supplies, apply for grants, and work to build strong relationships with local, state, and federal partners. It takes time, funding, cooperation, and a steady commitment from people who already have more than enough work waiting for them at home. That preparation may not attract much attention, but it can make all the difference when a fire starts miles from the nearest traditional fire station.

RFPAs do not replace agency firefighters or local fire departments. Wildfire response is strongest when ranchers, agencies, dispatchers, contractors, firefighters, landowners, and community members work together with mutual trust and respect. Each brings different equipment, experience, authority, and knowledge to the situation. What ranchers bring is especially valuable because they are already there. They live on the landscape, know it, work on it, and care for it every day. Protecting it is not

an abstract assignment; it is personal.

As we move through another fire season, I hope we will remember the people who answer the call and make an effort to support them before the next column of smoke appears. Learn about the RFPA serving your area, ask what equipment or supplies it needs, support local fundraising efforts, and thank the businesses and individuals that donate. If you are eligible to participate, consider becoming involved and completing the necessary training. When a ranching family is affected by fire, continue checking on them after the flames are gone and the headlines have faded. They may need hay, fencing supplies, labor, financial assistance, or simply someone willing to listen.

Wildfire exposes how vulnerable our rural communities can be, but it also reveals their strength. That strength can be found in engines maintained by volunteers, meals packed for crews, cattle moved out of harm's way, and neighbors who arrive through the smoke without asking whose property they are protecting. In ranch countries, helping defend a neighbor's land is not merely an act of service; it is who we are. •



To seed or not to seed: How to get a handle on post-fire seeding decisions for sagebrush rangelands

Chad S. Boyd, Kirk W. Davies, Cameron Duquette, Dustin Johnson, Rory O'Connor, Peter Olsoy, and Katie Wollstein

Oregon State University, Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center (EOARC); Burns, OR

The 2026 fire season is a stark reminder of how quickly life can change. As the smoke begins to settle, activities will shift from fire suppression to the numerous challenges associated with putting the pieces back together after fire. One of those challenges is post-fire restoration.

We (Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center) have been involved in many post-fire management planning consultations, and when the pickup stops, the first question is almost always: Do you think those perennial bunchgrasses are still alive? That's an important question because not only do perennial grasses provide forage for livestock, but they are also our best defense against increases in invasive annual grasses. So, it is important to have a sense of how many perennial grasses survived the fire to help us determine whether post-fire seeding is needed. Of course, the easiest way to determine fire-related perennial grass mortality is to wait until the next growing season. But when we need to make post-fire seeding and management decisions, we often can't afford to



Figure 1. Soil color following fire can provide clues to heat experienced during fire and associated perennial grass mortality. In increasing order of fire heat energy output/perennial grass mortality, post-fire soils may appear brown, black, or gray. Immediately post-fire, these contrasting colors are easily seen at a distance (top photo) and on close inspection (bottom photo). Generally speaking, the more brown soil present after a fire, the lower the perennial grass mortality. In the top photo, we could anticipate higher perennial grass mortality on the left side, where soils are predominantly black and gray, compared to the right side, where brown soils are more abundant.

wait if we want to limit post-fire annual grass invasion and restore livestock forage and wildlife habitat.

On sagebrush rangelands, soil color immediately after the fire can offer important clues about perennial grass mortality. Post-fire soil is generally one of three colors (Figure 1). Black soils occur under former shrub canopies, and perennial grass mortality in these areas can reach 70%. Within patches of black soil, and particularly in high-severity fires, you might see gray soils that represent ash layers created by complete or near-complete combustion of the associated shrub. Perennial grass mortality within gray soils will be at or near 100%. Brown soil occurs in the interspaces between shrubs and generally has relatively low mortality (up to about 30% in our experience). So, the vast majority of perennial grass mortality will occur on either black or gray soils. Armed with this information, a post-fire visual survey can give you a rough idea of perennial grass mortality at a site; the browner the soil, the better. Note that soil colors can change rapidly post-fire with wind erosion or rain events, so it's important to get out on the ground as quickly as possible after fire.

In addition to color, the remaining post-fire vegetation or “texture” you see as you look across a burned sagebrush landscape provides an indication of heat energy released during a fire, and thus perennial grass mortality (Figure 2). Burning shrubs play an outsized role in creating heat energy because they are calorically dense fuels. Thus, more shrub combustion creates more heat, leading to potentially higher perennial grass mortality. In our experience, when the majority of shrubs have unburned portions or remain as standing

burned “skeletons” following fire, perennial grass mortality may be low with most grasses surviving. Combustion of the majority of shrubs can produce moderate mortality, whereas complete above-ground combustion of shrubs signals relatively high mortality (perhaps exceeding 50%).

The real crux of whether perennial bunchgrasses die in a fire is if the growing points (i.e., buds), located at or just below the soil surface, are exposed to elevated heat for a long enough period to be killed. A simple but fairly accurate way to determine this is to place your finger on top of a grass plant’s remaining stubble and gently push down. If the plant stubble offers resistance and feels like a pincushion, the plant likely survived. If there is no resistance and your finger easily

pushes through the remaining plant material to below ground, it’s likely that the plant is dead.

Hopefully these tips will help you determine fire-related perennial grass mortality and make post-fire seeding decisions. The EOARC in Burns is currently working on scaling up our ability to map perennial grass mortality using drone and, hopefully, satellite data. If successful, these products will be very helpful in making post-fire seeding decisions at the scale of a whole fire, or a management unit therein.



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Figure 2. Greater shrub combustion during fire leads to higher heat energy output and higher perennial grass mortality. The burned plant community on the left has an abundance of standing shrub skeletons with some unburned shrubs, suggesting relatively low heat energy release during fire and relatively low perennial grass mortality. Compare this to the plant community in the foreground of the photo on the right, which had near-complete shrub combustion and likely higher perennial grass mortality. Note also the predominance of black and gray soils in the right-hand photo.

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