

## Moving Forward— A Vision for the Future

— by *Chris Perry, Oregon Rural Action Director*

It is with great pleasure that I set forth my vision for Oregon Rural Action and Northeast Oregon. I must acknowledge that my predecessor, Jane Sabin-Davis, whom I truly admire, and the staff at Oregon Rural Action have laid a very strong foundation on which to build. During this past summer many of you submitted to the Board a questionnaire about the future of Oregon Rural Action; targeting local policy changes and proactive projects as the desired direction that we wish to pursue. With that in mind, I submit to you the following:

I feel that the work and ongoing commitment of the Oregon Rural Action Energy Team in both Union and Baker Counties is extremely vital. This region has significant untapped wind and solar resources, as well as the agricultural land capacity to organically grow bio-fuels from plant feedstock, oilseed crops, and biomass waste as a heating source for schools as well as commercial and industrial buildings. I envision us continuing to strengthen our relationship with OTEC for more Green Power options and to invest in localized renewable energy projects and producers. Regional energy independence would enhance our region both economically and ecologically. We must identify and increase our allies in this issue to both increase our membership and better influence our local decision-makers and public officials to implement the necessary changes for a more sustainable energy future.

I feel the ongoing threats to and loss of agricultural land should be an important issue for Oregon Rural Action to address. Members of the Blue Mountain Chapter started meeting this summer to formulate a growth team, vision and strategy that would best enable us to combat both unsustainable local growth planning decisions and loss of agricultural lands. I have witnessed elsewhere the adverse consequences that un-managed growth brings to a rural community such as sprawl, lack of affordable housing and loss of productive farm land. The tentative name of our growth team is People Focused Planning, in which we desire to form a citizen group that is active on land use issues and engaged in the local planning process.

I see us continuing to help develop or enhance farmers' markets in La Grande and Baker City and throughout our region. I would like to see Oregon Rural Action continue its effort in the development of a strong and prosperous localized food-shed and make more viable our local community-based food systems. I would like to see the formation of an 80% within an 80 mile radius local food system in which significant numbers of our community fulfill the majority of their food needs within our region via farmers' markets, farm stands, community and backyard gardens, CSAs and other food cooperatives, stores that carry more local products, more community-wide organic food education and further developing the direct connections and partnerships between local farmers and local citizens.

The Snake River Chapter has focused on social and economic issues affecting the large Latino population residing within Malheur County. Latino communities are an integral part of our region and we must acknowledge that much of our Latino population has arrived as part of an exodus from a failed global economy. I envision Oregon Rural Action and the Snake River Chapter continuing to address



### Calendar

**Baker County Grassroots Alliance** meets every 2nd Monday at Mad Matilda's. Next meeting is November 13th at 7pm.

The **Blue Mountain Chapter** is meeting at noon in the basement of Mamacitas restaurant every 1st and 3rd Wednesday. The next quarterly meeting is December 11 at 7pm at the La Grande Public Library Community room located at 2006 4th St.

The **Snake River Chapter** meets every 3rd Thursday at the Malheur County library in Ontario. Next meeting is November 16th at noon. Lunch is provided.

**Solar Hot Water Heating Seminar**  
December 4th—Baker City  
December 5th—La Grande

(Continued on page 2)



poverty and expand on this crucial social and economic issue by addressing the high-school drop out rate, seeking solutions for adequate community food availability including the development of community gardens and a farmers' market, and working to provide the necessary resources to aid a significant homeless population.

I envision Oregon Rural Action assisting all our Northeast Oregon communities to remedy the inadequate access to Health Care and Wellness Programs for both adults and children by seeking possible solutions through the formation of community insurance co-ops and development of need fulfilling non-profit community health infrastructure. Many members and non-members alike have expressed to me a desire to address this issue and have shared with me their own personal plights regarding accessible and affordable health care.

I also envision Oregon Rural Action expanding by initiating new chapters in Umatilla and Wallowa counties where similar issues affect their communities.

In closing, I would like to share with you one of my favorite quotes, it comes from cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has".

## Oregon Rural Action

The Furrow is published three times each year by Oregon Rural Action. Oregon Rural Action supports and encourages community organizing around locally identified issues. Our members work together to promote healthy and sustainable rural communities and to ensure that all people have a voice in the decisions, policies, and systems that affect their lives.

### Board of Directors

Nancy Gledhill, Randy Joseph, Chuck Koch,  
Ramon Lara, Rebecca Luna, Rich Minogue

### Local Chapters

Baker County Grassroots Alliance  
Blue Mountain Chapter  
Snake River Chapter

### Staff

Chris Perry, Director  
Julie Keniry, Organizer/Office Admin  
Zachary Lauritzen, Organizer  
Diane Piña, Organizer

## New Director!

## Chris Perry

I am thrilled and honored to be taking on the position as your new Director/Lead Organizer for Oregon Rural Action. In all sincerity, I hope to earn your trust and respect and be your committed Director/Lead Organizer for the rest of my working life. That being said, I'm sure many of you would like to know more about me.

I was raised in the small rural town (it's not small anymore) of Castle Rock, Colorado. From there it was on to San Diego, California, where I attended San Diego State University on a track scholarship. I have been a passionate and competitive runner for over 25 years. My running focus for the last six years has been running 100-mile mountain trail ultramarathon races, of which I do about five or six a year. It is the perfect mix of my love of nature and running. Upon graduation from college, I joined the Peace Corp and spent several years in Tanzania in a rural economic development capacity which I found to be very rewarding.

In 1992, I moved to Portland, Oregon and started my now former career in Title Insurance. I enjoyed the research aspect of that field, in particular learning about land-use and planning issues. But to be honest with you, my numerous outside of work interests appealed to me much more, which included volunteering for environmental groups and causes and working with fellow community members on social and economic justice issues and political campaigns. In 2001, my family and I grew tired of big city life and I took a transfer to Grants Pass, Oregon. It was in Grants Pass that I became part of a local sustainable growth organization trying to stem the tide of unsustainable development adversely affecting that region. In January of 2005, my family, consisting of my wife Meg, daughter Emily - age 5 and son Edan - age 2 and I decided to make La Grande and Northeast Oregon our home.

It is the scenic beauty of our region that Meg and I initially found so appealing about Northeast Oregon during our backpacking forays from the west side of the state. As much as we savor our immense and largely unspoiled natural environment, it has been the people who have embraced us in this wonderfully engaged community that we find truly rewarding. I have dropped my anchor and plan to spend the rest of my life here in La Grande and Northeast Oregon.



ERROR: stackunderflow  
OFFENDING COMMAND: ~

STACK: