



## Oregon Tourism Commission Briefing

December 9, 2019

Driftwood Shores Resort  
88416 1<sup>st</sup> Ave.  
Florence, OR 97439

**Commissioners present include:** Scott Youngblood, Kenji Sugahara, Nigel Francisco, Richard Boyles, Don Anway, Maria Ponzi, Mia Sheppard, Greg Willitts, and Lucinda DiNovo.

Chair Youngblood calls the Commission briefing to order at 11:03 a.m. and welcomes the Commission, staff and guests to Florence.

Amy Owens, Driftwood Shores, welcomes the Commission to Driftwood Shores and to Florence.

Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon states what a pleasure it is to be in Florence and thanks the community for their hospitality.

### **RCTP Mid-year Update from EOVA**

Harry Dalgaard, Director of Regional Cooperative Management Program walks the Commission through a PowerPoint of the RCTP designation process and the timeline Eastern Oregon Visitors Association (EOVA) has been working through for their RCTP plan.

Alana Carollo, Executive Director of EOVA provides the Commission with a PowerPoint - a mid-year update to EOVA's RCTP plan.

Commissioner Sugahara discusses his opportunities to visit eastern Oregon. States that he is excited to hear about all of the grant applications submitted and looks forward to future progress made with the plan.

Commissioner Francisco asks how often the regional dashboards are updated.

Harry states they are updated quarterly.

Commissioner Francisco asks if the EOVA bylaws have been finalized.

Alana states the bylaws have been drafted and adopted by the board.

Commissioner Francisco asks about the membership to EOVA.

Alana explains how the membership levels at EOVA work.

Commissioner Willitts asks based on the size of the region, if virtual attendance to board meetings is allowed.

Alana states that they rotate the meetings around the region and that the board also offers a call-in option.

Commissioner Willitts asks if they utilize video attendance.

Alana explains that video conferencing hasn't been utilized yet, only a call-in line is provided.

Commissioner Boyles asks about the OTIS training and what errors to the eastern Oregon listings were identified.

Alana states that the errors were small and mostly user-based, but learnings on how to use the system have improved.

Chair Youngblood congratulates Alana for her work and states excitement to see the implemented improvements.

### **Oregon Food Trails**

Scott Bricker, Director of Product Development provides the Commission with a PowerPoint on the evolution of the Oregon Food Trail program.

Commissioner DiNovo asks how she can best guide people to be included on the map.

Scott explains that there are Food Trail business leads that open the process up every 2-3 years to allow new or terminated businesses to be updated.

Commissioner Ponzi congratulates Scott on the Food Trails program. Asks how, with the many hundreds of wineries in the Willamette Valley, specific wineries get designated to be a part of a Food Trail.

Scott states that to be designated for the Food Trail, it's more about the farm, farmer, product and experiences that are being highlighted. The wineries have other opportunities to be included in other "trails" or maps.

Commissioner Ponzi states that she just met with a woman who is working with family farms on creating land trusts. Given the aging Oregon farmer and understanding the value of a farm experience in Oregon, connecting her with some of these small farmers may be something to consider for this program.

Scott states that a connection would be great as the average age of farmers is 60 years old.

Commissioner Sugahara states that many Oregon restaurants are not serving Oregon wine and that it seems to be based on the distributors. Asks if there is a "west" Gorge food trail planned.

Scott states there is already a Gorge "Fruit Loop" trail established. These trails come out of demand and so far, there hasn't been additional interest in a west Gorge food trail.

Commissioner Boyles states how much of a fan he is of the food trail program and that his wife and winery have participated in South Willamette Valley Food Trail. States he's pleased to see the forward thinking of the Food Trail on how to keep the program vibrant and expanding by creating inter-company connections. Asks whether there are any metrics in place to evaluate the program.

Scott explains that with development work – it's not just about getting a project done and moving on. When development is created, it has to be maintained. We now do a yearly survey on metrics from businesses involved in food trails to see how the program is working so we can continue refining our work. States that the Umpqua Food trail has established website statistics. There has long been a desire to have an agritourism study and while we can't do one specifically for Oregon, we are joining in a national survey which could push us into a statewide survey.

Commissioner Sugahara asks how the selection to be included in the Food Trail is done.

Scott explains that 1) is there a need/ interest for the community to establish a food trail; 2) it is evaluated if there are businesses offering the visitor experience that is promised. There has been only a small number of applicants that we felt like it wasn't the right fit for the program. It takes some investigating into an applicant and a review to ensure businesses meet the land use criteria allowing them to participate.

Commissioner DiNovo asks if there will ever be a regulation as to how much "local" has to be included to be designated on the Food Trail.

Scott states that those requirements are already in place, and that he can provide that detailed information.

Commissioner Ponzi asks if a North Willamette Valley trail is being developed.

Scott states that there is a Polk County trail being developed and that there may be an opportunity for future food trail development on the east side of the Willamette River. Yamhill County is very interested in a trail understanding that local farm stands could be a great asset to wine tasting.

### **Central Coast Culinary & Ag Studio Update**

Natalie Inouye, VP of Tourism Marketing for Lane County thanks the Commission for coming to Florence. Jesse Dolin, Destination Coordinator for the Oregon Coast Visitors Association (OCVA) states how much of a pleasure it has been to work on Culinary & Ag Studio program.

Natalie and Jesse present the Commission with a PowerPoint overview of the recently completed South Willamette Valley Food Trail and Central Coast Culinary & Ag Studio. States that by building these programs, it is not just about highlighting specific businesses but building up destination experiences.

Commissioner Sugahara asks about the online South Willamette Valley Food Trail map and if there is a way to click on specific businesses allowing creation for a personalized visitor map?

Natalie states that option isn't available yet, but they are working on developing that.

Jesse states that developing a self-guided populated map would be terrific.

Commissioner Sugahara states that incorporating these businesses on a map that is frequented during the shoulder season is a terrific way to highlight businesses and destinations.

Todd states that there is so much to like about this program. Based on research several years ago – we knew visitors were coming to Oregon for food experiences. What we didn't know was if that experience would change their behaviors once they went home. What the research showed us is that a vacation in Oregon, when they experienced Oregon product – did in fact change behavior. Our visitors go home and seek Oregon products. There could be opportunity to increase point of sales with direct businesses as well. When people ask why we support creating food trails with lodging tax funds – it's because products can be an introduction into someone's potential trip to Oregon. This work is important and very exciting.

#### **Review of December 10, 2019 Commission Agenda**

Todd reviews the December 10 Commission meeting agenda and asks the Commission if they have any questions ahead of tomorrow's meeting.

#### **Other Business**

Chair Youngblood states that this portion of the meeting is an opportunity to discuss or review any information heard today or other issues that the Commissioners would like to bring up. Asks if there are any topics or issues for discussion.

Chair Youngblood thanks everyone for their presentations and looks forward to the afternoon, where the Commission will get to experience Florence's culinary scene.

Chair Youngblood adjourns the meeting at 12:44 p.m.

**Staff present include:** Todd Davidson, Sarah Watson, Jenny Hill, Scott West, Jeff Hampton, Kevin Wright, Teresa O'Neill, Petra Hackworth, Kristin Dahl, Harry Dalgaard, Greg Eckhart, Carole Astley, Courtney Brie Doss, Michael Sturdevant, Kate Sappell, Jordan McCauley, Gracia Camizzi, Mo Sherifdeen, Jaime Eder and Sara Morrissey.