

# Oregon Agritourism Network Meeting Notes

## July 28, 2015

**Attending:** Members: Thomas Hogue, Carol Tannenbaum, Jeanne Carver, Scottie Jones, Brian Butenschoen, Geoff Horning, Riki Saltzman, Austin McGuigan, Katie Bray, Amanda Welker, Erika Polmar; (by Webex) Sara Miller, Kalie Davis, Melissa Fery  
Travel Oregon staff: Kristin Dahl, Katy Clair, Lisa Itel, Linea Gagliano, Staj Pace, Elena Vizzini;  
Facilitator: Kathi Jaworski

### Overview of Travel Oregon's Agritourism Strategic Plan:

- Hire a program manager
- Convene the statewide Agritourism network
- Support Action Teams
- Increase visibility of agritourism product in Oregon's marketing and sales efforts
- Update the 2003 agritourism business and product development handbook
- Pursue legislation in support of agritourism
- Host Agritourism Studios across state
- Conduct study of agritourism's economic impact

### Questions/Comments:

- Suggestion to do some Agritourism Studios to focus on sectors vs location (e.g. for lavender farms statewide)
- Question re: what activities count as agritourism for the purposes of Travel Oregon investment. "Do we have to separate the sales of product to locals from the tourism side of this initiative, especially when thinking about marketing or events?"
  - No, we can integrate, as we see the connection, however events should include reaching out to "tourist markets"- people who live 50+ miles away.
- Question re defining agritourism: the Handbook will be a how-to and will integrate some preliminary standards (e.g. web presence, etc); standards likely a conversation for the whole network vs just the folks working on Handbook
- Reinforcement that visitors are keenly interested in what is happening with the land, the culture of life on the farm or ranch. Product sales are driven by this.
- Strong support for getting the agritourism economic impact study completed as a priority

### Member Updates: What's going on in your network, your region?

Thomas Hogue – Oregon Dept. of Land Conservation and Development

- Conversations about new rule making about commercial use on resource lands – ORS 215. I don't think this group would be ready for this, but needs to be on radar.

Austin McGuigan – Polk County Planning Director

- Putting on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Oregon State Fair. No longer in OPRD's hands.
- This industry really needs to look at rules

Carole Tannenbaum, Oregon Lavender Association, McKenzie Lavender Farm –

- Our area, we just came thru our big bloom of lavender, farm tour in July with over 25 Lavender farms in bloom.
- Heard from board and visitors, that it was one of the biggest years. I personally had a 30% increase in visitors. It was very successful year.

Katy Clair – Travel Oregon

- Fall Bounty Campaign toolkit is near completion and will be released in September.
- Working on a passport this year focused on encouraging visitors to engage in agritourism experiences from Sept 8-Nov 30. It is aimed to be an inspirational trip planning guide as well.

#### Katie Bray- Oregon Cheese Guild

- First ever executive director of Oregon Cheese Guild, which has 22 members
- Starting promotion for our Wedge event in Portland. We are looking for specialty food producers. If you are an association can help get the word out to producers, please let me know.
- We've been working on redoing our website, and we popped on a BuzzFeed list of best food trails as #20, and didn't even know it! Have been encouraging our social media connections to vote for us, and have moved up to #6 as a result.
- Would encourage to think about more trails like Lavender trails- very marketable.

#### Linea Gagliano – Travel Oregon

- I work with the media to get what we are doing and what our interest groups are doing
- This agritourism topic and product is very sexy and media love it, so I'm happy to raise the level of what we are doing and what product we have.
- On the public affairs side, being involved in the policy updates is important

#### Lisa IteI – Travel Oregon

- Main goal is to attract international visitors
- We've been working on promoting agritourism and culinary to international visitors forever, but I see the most potential around the product development piece so we can offer more
- Major international markets, in order of size: Canada, China, UK, New Zealand, Germany

#### Riki Saltzman – Oregon Folklife Network

- Work in partnership with the University of Oregon, Oregon Culture and Trusts
- We are finishing our folk life survey of the Gorge – that report should be out in Sept.
- We just got word that we got the grant to conduct the survey for Eastern Oregon
- Working on grant for Portland Metro. This will look at native crafts, and all makers, culture keepers – if interested in being beta tested, let me know. We are looking for people that can share
- Multi-cultural cooking class demo series coming about in Ontario

#### Scottie Jones – Leaping Lamb Farm Stay, FarmStay US

- Oregon Agritourism Liability law SB 341 passed
- US Farm Stay association now has a certification so that we can assure the farms we promote are adhering to certain standards. Even though it is self-assessed, can be very helpful to visitors.
- I get lots of questions about what it is like being a farmer
- We had open barn days this spring, we had people all day, they brought picnics, stayed all day. We only shared on Facebook and had 50+ people show up.

#### Brian Butenschoen- Oregon Brewer's Guild

- 234 Oregon Breweries
- Hops are grown in Oregon in mainly 2 counties
- Barley is grown across the state
- We have about 6-7 festivals a year (including the big Oregon brewer's festival this week)

#### Jeanne Carver - Imperial Ranch

- I attended recently the International Conference on Rural Development in Tennessee, it was fascinating. Theme was that the Strength of Rural Communities, equals the prosperity of nations
- Selling wool to Japanese manufacturer- looking for best, high quality, sustainable materials
- Farmers/ranchers like I am, I think, are not the best at planning; we are entrepreneurs, for better and worse

#### Amanda Welker – Oregon Department of Agriculture

- Work on marketing, development, and I focus on the international side. We do have a new domestic person coming on board, so they will be good addition to this Network.
- Summer is very busy, we are meeting with suppliers to buy Oregon product

Geoff Horning – Oregon Agribusiness Council

- Non-profit trade association: We engage Oregonians so they know where their food is coming from
- We are responsible for the row crops signs on highways
- We have a program called Adopt a Farmer, we connect a student with a farmer for a year. The students get to learn from the farmer. We will be working with 50 different farms this year.
- Not public yet, but a farm in Madras is building the world's largest private Barley brewing facility/malting. It's an old farm that did wheat, and now they are going to be capitalizing on the whole Farm to Beer thing.
- Was just with Marion County Sheriff's Dept. and there is a lot of concern with traffic in rural areas with farm equipment, there's been a lot of accidents. People are really concerned with safety so need to think about that first and foremost.

Erika Polmar – Plate and Pitchfork

- I'm thick in the land use permit dance that's not always easy
- I'm also working with farmers who are thrilled by the crescendo of food tourism in summer, , but then are not dealing well with the steep cliff that's happening after peak season.
- Seeing more demand from visitors all over mid-west, from corporate travelers wanting to have that authentic Oregon food experiences, but cannot meet demand due to permitting hurdles

Sara Miller – Northeast Oregon Economic Development District

- New grant received for more agritourism development training in Northeast Oregon

Melissa Fery – Oregon State University Small Farms Program

- Work primarily with small farms in the Willamette Valley and talk with them weekly about agritourism – they tend to get very frustrated with rules and permits and see them often bootlegging things.
- Was at a National Agritourism Network Extension Conference in Florida and there they have the Florida Farm Bureau working with them and in favor of them so they do not have the land use issues we have in Oregon

Kalie Davis – SAGE Center

- We are already set up for Agritourism, we are a visitor center that focus on sharing the story and the real experiences about food and farm
- Hope to have Agritourism Studios in Morrow County

## **Action Team Homework Updates: Initial Priorities and Actions**

### **Marketing –**

- Main Priority: Marketing Toolkit that would help people trying to get into agritourism, would have links to policy info, basic marketing information for newly established businesses as well as specific information for more established agritourism businesses: What steps do I need to take to market myself?
- Questions/Comments: Where do you see the local DMOs helping these business developments come together? Many times it's the economic development organizations and planning departments vs DMOs who don't have a lot of organizational capacity in rural areas.

Thomas Hogue can provide policy information to the group

The Toolkit is related to the Handbook (see Economic Development Team) but can be fast-tracked as a stand-alone product first, then integrated later

Travel Oregon has assembled a folder of sample Agritourism Handbooks/Manuals on google docs- will make available to the group

- Immediate Next Steps:
  - Meet after Labor Day to work through “wireframes”- content of toolkit
  - Industry Communications- set up a joint plan between Travel Oregon and ODA
  - Develop webinars to walk businesses through the toolkit (connection with ODA Field Offices)
- Additional Priorities:
  - Idea for a knowledgeable “Toolkit Ambassador” in each county who could answer questions and be an ongoing resource. A regional network with resources to share e.g. templates of events or partnerships that have worked before (e.g. Fruit Loop, Plate and Pitchfork/Winding Waters)
  - Statewide recognition program for agritourism businesses
  - Strategic plan for marketing agritourism- check back in after October.

### Economic Development –

- Main Priority: Update and add to the Agritourism Development Handbook, 2003 – Sara and Melissa have used the old one and found it user friendly and variable. Update should include:
  1. How to get started, what you need to know,
  2. marketing toolkit inside of it,
  3. how to evaluate your business and what you have to offer to agritourism market,
  4. standards,
  5. case studies.
- Immediate Next Steps:
  1. Identify who wants to work on this project?
  2. Distribute 2003 Handbook
  3. Identify what is missing/what want new in it (survey perhaps?)
  4. Review additional resources/handbooks from other states
  5. Ask Agri-Business Council for permission to update 2003 Handbook and be a part of project (Geoff and Jeanne already represent the Agri-Business Council- note that the project started with OR Dept of Agriculture so will want to loop them in too)
  6. Create Standards – what hours open, do you have a bathroom, are you in line with state tourism definition, do you have insurance, signs for safety/warnings (think new Ag bill 341), tool for industry to understand economic impacts
  7. Create marketing/distribution plan for handbook in on-line and printed form;
    - Look for publishing partners and resources (e.g. OSU could help)
    - California has a good online model
- Questions/Comments: Only a percentage of agricultural businesses are interested in agritourism- may not see the benefit to them. Include economic impact information in the Handbook, to entice more agricultural businesses to explore agritourism or to support other agritourism businesses because of their local economic impact- make the case. Economic impact study could help with this. Also, need to coordinate content with Marketing Toolkit project- some overlap in terms of business development content.
- Additional Priorities:
  1. Pilot region for intensive agritourism development focus
    - policy/economic development testing grounds
    - show impact of agritourism on other businesses in region
    - will be complemented by plans for the statewide economic impact study
  2. Develop and promote curated farm loops that have standard hours, have a marketing plan – not just a grassroots cardboard sign trail
    - Potential for future initiative adapted from scenic bikeway program- revisit this project idea at November agritourism network meeting.

- Once developed, they can be better marketed- so some existing ones are candidates for marketing, new itineraries could be part of economic development team's work; idea to create a system of trails around the state

## Policy –

- Main priority: Identify the pain points/issues that make it difficult to establish and operate a successful agritourism business. This very connected to land use policy, and its “regulatory framework for commercial activities” on EFU land. Not easy! Pain points in need of refinement include:
  - Farm stays and other commercial activity
  - Need for some standardization of interpretation
  - Specific examples exist of how this plays out in the field- need to document
  - Once economic impact study done, can inform best strategy for moving forward with land use policy: tie with regional pilot idea? Fix existing vs propose new policy framework?
- Questions/Comments
  - Regional pilot idea from Economic Development team dovetails with policy. Recommend that this be delayed until policy committee work on strategy (see below) is completed first, as a pilot may not be the best way to influence policy in this case. Econ Dev team can keep conversation going, and look to engage potential partners in the broader network as we open it up.
  - Add staff from Farm Bureau to this action team
- Steps:
 

Policy by nature is not a step by step process. Each step yields the next one vs being able to lay out a full formed workplan at the outset.

  - Outreach effort to gather evidence of pain points/issues.
  - Conduct economic impact study- strong support for accelerating this element of Travel Oregon's strategic plan, as it is foundational for building the policy case. Earliest estimated completion date as per Kristin: Fall 2016
  - Idea of a pilot area – one strategy for building the case for a policy change, but not the only one. Risk losing the momentum but policymakers are less nervous about pilots, so it's a strategic choice to make.
  - Another big strategic choice- Do you go into the existing policy framework and make fixes, or do you go into the Oregon law and create a new framework? That's a major political decision

## Implications for Action Team Work:

A lot hinges on the economic impact study (marketing, public relations, policy change). But can take some significant action in the meantime, and there is need for cross-team coordination.

Each action team will focus on initial project. The short term projects are:

- Marketing Toolkit
- Agritourism Handbook
- Documentation of Policy “Pain Points”

If folks are interested in changing action teams because the specific project selected is not their primary interest or expertise, you are free to do so.

Projects interrelate as shown here:

<b>Marketing Toolkit (Marketing Team)</b>	<b>Agritourism Handbook (Economic Development Team)</b>	<b>Policy Action Team</b>
Develop as free-standing product for quick completion, but coordinate parameters of contents with Handbook	Feed policy team case studies with relevance for policy action team	Provide policy information as needed to other action teams
Feed specific content to Handbook that may not be in the marketing toolkit e.g. how to assess your assets relative to the market?	Coordinate integration of free-standing Toolkit into Handbook	
Coordinate comprehensive outreach/distribution plan with Handbook team that builds upon experience disseminating Toolkit	Coordinate Handbook policy content with policy action team	
<b>Longer term</b>	<b>Longer term</b>	<b>Longer term</b>
Coordinate with Economic Development Action Team re opportunities related to farm trails and itineraries	Define Farm Trail project opportunities	Coordinate with Economic Development Action Team re: opportunities for Regional Pilots

## Next Steps

### Action Teams:

- Homework: Establish quarterly milestones for your work by end of August
- Where appropriate, recruit additional Team members (not for the whole Leadership group, but for the action team)
- Start coordinating and implementing everyone you want to complete by September 30
- Melissa, Katy and Thomas will continue to be conveners of Economic Development, Marketing and Policy Teams respectively

### Leadership Team for the Network

- Will meet two more times in 2015
- Next meeting: late September-early October (90-min phone call, just the action team leads)
  - Possible agenda items: standards, Action Team updates and consolidated milestones, further conversation on farm trails, update on Economic Impact Study possibilities, outreach strategy for full group meeting below
- Following meeting on November 12th
  - It is possible that this meeting will be open to a much larger audience as we take steps to build out the network, depending on progress from the action teams.

### Travel Oregon

- Will establish a basecamp virtual workspace for each Action Team and orientation
- Will make Google docs files of sample Agritourism manuals available to all
- Will provide staff to participate in each action team and will respond to other requests for assistance