

OREGON AGRITOURISM COORDINATION MEETING | NOTES

July 10, 2018 | Portland, Oregon

KEY ACTION ITEMS

Travel Oregon is willing to move these three key action items forward:

- Form an ad hoc steering committee to examine how to best facilitate interagency coordination and find a “house” for this work
- Activate a working group around educating county and regional agencies
- Reconvene this group in approximately six months

WELCOME & CONTEXT SETTING

Travel Oregon has traditionally been a convener in the Agritourism space and is willing and able to continue in this role; Travel Oregon is also willing or step aside and let another entity take over the convening role.

Opportunity for today is to go beyond networking to foster intentional engagement, build trust and being to improve coordination around agritourism in Oregon.

Please help us update the [Agritourism Handbook](#) by reviewing content on the [Industry website](#) and submit edits or additions to kjaworski@write-to-know.com by July 27.

PANEL TRENDS AFFECTING AGRITOURISM AND ITS ROLE IN FARM PRESERVATION

Erick Garman, Oregon Department of Agriculture

* Slides from presentation incorporated in meeting slide deck

Shari Sirkin, Friends of Family Farmers (FOFF)

- Owner of small farm in Corbett. Have had farm dinners for 10 years: fundraiser dinners, weddings, Plate & Pitchfork dinners
- Director of Friends of Family Farmers

FOFF works to support family-owned small and mid-size farms in Oregon. Recently completed listening sessions in 19 communities to hear what challenges Oregon farmers are facing. In the past Oregon Farm Link came out of these listening sessions (matches land-seekers with land-holders) and have developed a watchdog program.

Many farmers want to be able to do agritourism to help them be successful as a small farmer. Not many subsidies are available for small farms, and it is getting increasingly hard to survive as a small farmer.

Majority of small farms grow food crops, not commodities (like wheat, corn, grain)

Main concerns that FOFF has heard:

- Some wineries seem to get a free pass to do agritourism activities that farms and even breweries do not.
- Patchwork agritourism policy from county to county. Wouldn't it be in our best interest to have a statewide agritourism policy?
- Complaint-driven system. Example of Multnomah county's desire to limit activities on Sauvie Island but not in Eastern Multnomah county (Corbett). Issue of how your agritourism business effects your neighbors.

Once had a corporate dinner, was paid \$2,000 for 50 people. Agritourism opportunities like these present a lucrative addition to an occupation that is difficult to make enough money to stay on the land.

Erika Polmar, Plate & Pitchfork

* Slides from presentation incorporated into meeting slide deck.

Because farming is a priority in Oregon, a land-use policy was created in 1973 to protect farm land for farming uses. This can create a tricky environment for agritourism.

Agritourism = direct consumer engagement with farms and working landscapes

Many agritourism products have been developed that do not fit into an established "agritourism" box, e.g., goat yoga. Furthermore, people are farming on land that is not Exclusive Farm Use, known as EFU, such as rural residential, farm & forest. Learn more about land use and EFU lands [here](#).

Due to the diversity of Oregon, a blanket agritourism policy might not be the best approach.

SB 960 – statewide agritourism statute that was created but not mandated to be adopted by every county. Counties can adopt, not adopt, or ratchet down the language to fit the county's unique needs. Read the enrolled bill [here](#).

There is often a disconnect of rule and interpretation (how a farm stand is defined can vary between counties /planners)

PANEL Q&A

Policy advocacy

Comment: It seems important to keep the umbrella inclusive for policy that supports agritourism development. The focus should be on keeping farmers and ranchers on their land. We need to find out how to cultivate relationships with existing agricultural entities that already have powerful lobbies. It makes sense to find an appropriate entity to permanently house agritourism efforts (rather than Travel Oregon).

Goal of the meeting is to have a common agenda and path forward, not necessarily to determine who will be at the steering wheel.

Financial support for agritourism development and advocacy

Comment: Wineries got the advantageous land use policy they have by contributing substantial sums to pay for lobbying on their behalf.

More recently, cideries gained the same privileges as wineries. Maybe farms need to join forces with breweries to advocate for adding this language into farm use policy.

Bree, Oregon Wine Board: There are many similarities between the farms in Oregon and the wineries (size, production). Wineries have leveraged specialty crop plot grants – is this something other agritourism businesses could do?

- The grants are meant for crop promotion. Farms wanting to apply them to agritourism purposes have been denied eligibility in the past.
- FOFF does not accept government funding at this point.

There are also value-added producer grants available.

Threats to agriculture

Have lost 65,000 acres of EFU since 1974. The Urban Growth Boundary has expanded around Portland and Salem, which has contributed to this shrinking

of EFU land. As farmers "age out" in future years, we are at risk of losing thousands more acres to out-of-state developers or as second homes for people seeking to live or vacation in an agricultural setting.

Demand for agritourism

Do we know what type of agritourism experiences are most sought by consumers visiting Oregon?

Wineries probably bring in the most revenue to the state. There is a national survey that has not been updated since 2012. We have not done an economic impact study for Agritourism in Oregon.

Farm stay requests are at high demand.

More information around Agritourism trends in Oregon available in provided PDF titled OR Agritourism Information.

BUILDING A SHORT LIST OF CRITICAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Travel Oregon presented a starting list of potential issues and opportunities for collaborative action, based on recent surveys, data, and interviews with stakeholders. After discussion, the group agreed that the list was a reasonable and comprehensive starting point. The items on the list are in bold below, each followed by participant comments

Educate county and regional agencies as well as policy makers about the benefits of agritourism and the associated activities that are currently permissible. Encourage the development of an easy-to-understand and transparent process for operators to legally expand their businesses to include agritourism. Establish best practices to support counties in bringing their codes current.

- Regarding policy, important to flag that there may be reasons for why a county isn't updating its policy. Example of Washington County deciding not to update their code to avoid disrupting existing operations.
 - o However, Washington County has been losing farmers due to litigation around the lack of policy and code.

Provide technical assistance for agritourism operators so that they can effectively navigate and be in compliance with laws, codes and permitting requirements.

- Travel Oregon does not need to be the one providing this, but has stepped in to fill a need heard during rural tourism studio work

Develop a marketing and communications strategy to advance agritourism in Oregon and provide operators with support on how to engage with that framework.

- Seeing as this is in Travel Oregon's wheelhouse, should it be a focus of this group?
 - o Travel Oregon does high-level inspirational marketing, but should not be the only entity thinking about how we market agritourism businesses. Regional Destination Marketing Organizations could lead this effort in their region in collaboration with Travel Oregon. There are also groups like the Oregon Wine Board who have marketing budgets and plans to tap into.
- On the ground, one of the biggest challenges is to get people who could benefit from marketing aware of the resources available to them.
- When thinking about marketing and communications, it's important to build in a conversation of type of advertising that is most strategic for operators to plug into.

Provide opportunities for operators to network, learn, and gain assistance with business planning from other operators and resources providers.

- The question of who is leading and what the structure is has been ongoing discussion. That said, if we create alignment around goals and have those available on one or numerous websites, such as industry.traveloregon.com, we could start to move in one direction under a steering committee or something similar.

Improve interagency coordination to support the sustainable development of agritourism including: creating a more connected process for businesses and operators to understand and meet necessary requirements and supporting a more streamlined process.

- Between government agencies (statewide and local), institutional programs, advocacy groups / commodity organizations

TABLE DISCUSSION: HOW COULD INCREASED COORDINATION ADDRESS THESE CRITICAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES?

- How would collaboration add value to working on this issue?
- Do you have specific strategy ideas?
- Who are the key partners to engage in a collaborative approach?
- Identify a clear first step and timing.

REPORT OUT: FLIP CHART SUMMARIES

Educate County and Regional Agencies

- Examine what has already been done (review political work done by wineries and cideries), develop a case study of counties and operators to demonstrate best practices and processes and how it leads to economic development in counties
- Counties need to know what they can change or limits on ability to condition, limit uses
- Regional education at the DMO level
- Ordinance updates with grant support for DLCD
- Farm dinner for legislators and staff
- Better understanding of what's allowed will contribute to equity – regional diversification that celebrates unique aspects of Oregon's agricultural heritage
- Build case through an Agritourism Economic Impact Study
- Key Partners: OHA, OLCC, ODOT, Fire, Law Enforcement, DLCD, AOC, DEQ, Regional Solutions, Local farm orgs
- Collaboration would help increase policy clarity (predictability balanced with flexibility)
- Time training and events for planners to happen when there is time in the cycle of other planning work that they must regularly do, so that what is offered happens when planners are in a position to take action.

Provide Technical Assistance

- Provide clarity to technical issues that surround tourism
- Create a clearing house, a single place where this information can be found
- Hire a position/ombudsman under OAP (like office of outdoor rec at OPRD)
- Small grants for operators to accomplish permits, etc.

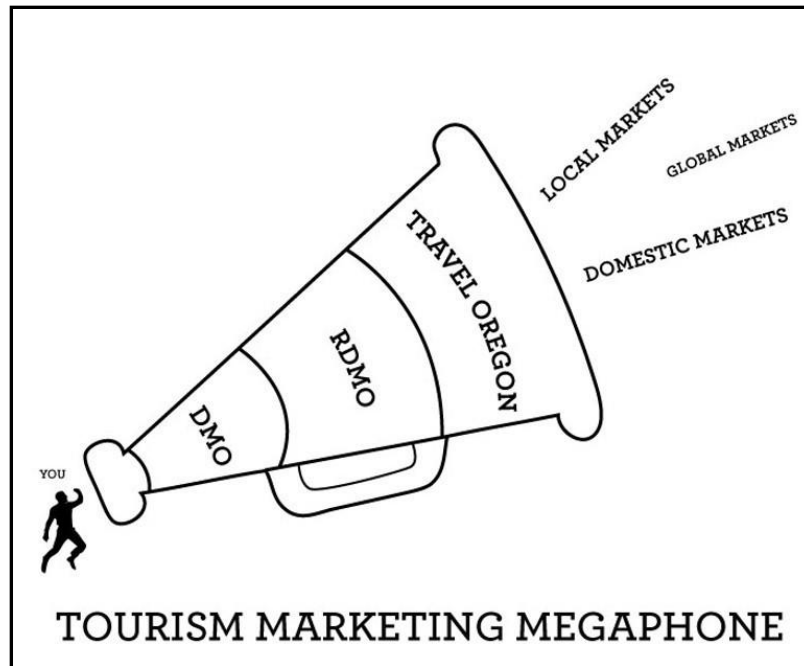
- Distribution of existing resources to operators and agencies
- Many key partners, state county and local: OAN, OAP, AOC, ODA, Friends of Family Farmers, Travel Oregon, RDMOs, DMOs, Associated trade associations and boards (cheese guild, winemakers, etc.), DEQ, OHA, Public Health, OSU Extension, Oregon Regional Solutions
- **Possible Next Steps: Pull together a working group of partners to start identifying technical issues**

Provide Opportunities for Operators to Network and Learn

- Key strategies: Build a house for all agencies / orgs to collaborate under. Within that structure, build out a road show to go to where the operators are. Focus on geographically local networking and learning among operators
- Regional gatherings for operators
- More efficient use of time
- Instill the value of cross-marketing and collaboration
- Key partners: Grower associations and groups; county planners and economic development; local DMOs regional DMOs; local growers; OSU extension; agencies
- **Possible Next Steps: Define or identify the structure and initiate regional gatherings**

Marketing and Communications

- Build awareness of Travel Oregon's "megaphone" strategy to clarify and disseminate the message
- Provide an increased reach by perfecting toolkit for communications, create more plug-and-play toolkits for operators to plug into (ODA and Travel Oregon)
- Provide trainings/webinars for producers to impact consumer engagement (easy + high impact)
- Work closely with local SBDCs and take advantage of marketing partnerships already in place (branded efforts Travel Oregon is already doing, Food Trails for example)
- Key partners: All orgs. in Oregon with marketing platforms. Unify the voice across these orgs.
- **Possible Next Steps:** Know when and how to use the megaphone. Make obvious where to find Agritourism information on Industry.TravelOregon.com + identify all the associations in Oregon that offer marketing help



NEXT STEPS:

The group discussed which items were ready to move forward with some additional planning.

Form an ad hoc steering committee to examine how to best facilitate interagency coordination and find a "house" for this work.

Steering Committee Volunteers:

- Shari Sirkin, Friends of Family Farmers
- Carla McLane, Murrow County (Educate county and regional agencies piece)
- Samara Phelps, Clackamas County Tourism
- Jeanne Carver, Imperial Stock Ranch
- Janet Dodson, Eastern Oregon Visitors Association
- Erick Garman, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture
- Scottie Jones, Leaping Lamb Farm/U.S. Farm Stay Association
- Mark Ellsworth, Governor's Office / Regional Solutions
- Erika Polmar, Plate & Pitchfork
- Sam Angima, OSU Extension
- Bree Boskov, Oregon Wine Board
- Scott Bricker, Travel Oregon

- Other folks (not in attendance today, but critical stakeholders) may be recruited as needed.

Questions and comments related to exploring the "house" or "network manager" role for future Oregon agritourism collaboration:

- What is the Oregon Agritourism Partnership doing right now?
 - o Believes in a grower-centric, operator-centric voice
 - o The OAP structure still exists, but open to making the board structure as collaborative as possible
 - o Cannot build anything without operator involvement
- What and where is the house?
 - o Steering committee will take up this question
- Why doesn't ODA house Agritourism office?
 - o ODA doesn't currently have the infrastructure or resources to take it on. Different states have addressed this in different ways. Some in Governor's office, some in Tourism, some in Dept of Ag., some in Extension, etc.
 - o If we start to organize this issue and better define it, we will be able to go to the legislature and make a case for a new position within ODA.

Activate a working group around educating county and regional agencies:

Volunteers for the Education group:

- Tim Murphy, Dept. of Land Conservation & Development – (Lead?)
- Samara Phelps, Clackamas County Tourism
- Erika Polmar, Plate & Pitchfork
- Carla McLane, Morrow County
- Jim Johnson, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture
- TBD, Travel Oregon

To work on Educating County Planners and Agencies piece, need people in this room involved (and some who are not) to compile information/white papers to use for educational purposes. The current red/green map isn't the best way to represent where counties are at.

Commit to reconvene and reconnect

The overall goal is effective collaborative action to advance agritourism in Oregon. **Travel Oregon committed to reconvene this group in approximately six months**, at which time we can review:

- Progress by Steering Committee working in the interim
- Progress by Education Committee working in the interim
- Implications for additional next steps
- New developments and/or other business to be discussed