

# OREGON AGRITOURISM SUMMIT



2012/2013

Summary

Two events focusing on agritourism and bringing together stakeholders to discuss opportunities, challenges, relationships, and policy.

# OREGON AGRITOURISM SUMMIT: PART I GETTING TO YES

NOVEMBER 30, 2012

## Summary

The Oregon Agritourism Summit: Getting to YES for agritourism business development was held on November 30, 2012. This summit was intended for farmers and agri-business owners who were currently operating or interested in agritourism opportunities to diversify economic stability. Goals of the summit included strengthening businesses through education, providing inspiration and networking opportunities, and collaboratively developing a path for the future of agritourism in Oregon. 157 participants, including a sizable number of young farmers and representation from many established and start-up farms joined in the day-long event.

Participants met together for a plenary session for a keynote address from Clackamas County Commissioner Jim Bernard, an overview of agritourism and a county government's efforts to support its growth; "Market Trends: 6 Kinds of Agritourism" presented by Mary Stewart of MARStewart Group, and three farmers, Bob Crouse of Fort Vannoy Farms, Barb Iverson of Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm and Scottie Jones of Leaping Lamb Farm Stay, who provided motivation to others by sharing about their agritourism businesses.

Two concurrent sessions with three options in each session gave opportunity for participants to learn more about important issues that they face in developing agritourism businesses. Session topics included:

- Navigating Regulations
- Marketing your Destination: Internet and Beyond
- Getting Started with Business Planning
- Reducing Risk by Managing Liability
- Hospitality: Creating the Customer Experience
- Collaborative Models for Agritourism

PowerPoint presentations and video from each of the sessions were collected, as much as possible, and made available on-line at: <http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/oregon-agritourism>  
Oregon State University Small Farms program sponsored this event.

## Evaluation

At the conclusion of the summit, evaluations were disseminated to all of the participants in an effort to capture feedback about the day's usefulness, identify key topics or barriers, and evaluate the overall climate associated with agritourism businesses in Oregon. Forty-five percent of the registered participants returned evaluations.

The following conveys responses to a sampling of questions:

Scale of 1 to 5      1= poor      5= excellent

- Overall value of Oregon Agritourism Summit to you: 4.3

Scale of 1 to 5      1= not at all      5= yes, very much so

- Would you like to have some form of organized agritourism system in your area? 4.6
- Will what you learned today help you improve your agribusiness success? 4.3
- Did you make personal connections today that will benefit your agribusiness? 4.0
- Would you be interested in attending an annual agritourism conference? 4.4
- Did the format of the summit meet your learning and networking needs? 4.2
- Were there ideas you heard today that you plan to implement into your own business? 4.3

When asked what the motivation was to attend today's summit:

- 96% of the respondents attended the summit to gain knowledge.
- 70% of the respondents attended the summit to network with others.
- 19% of the respondents had other reasons for attending the summit.

In addition, the evaluation captured qualitative responses to questions like:

- Are there additional types of local training or resources that would be helpful to you?
- What topics would you like to have covered at future events?
- What would some of the topics or discussion you would like to see covered at the March 1, 2013 summit that will have public policy focus?

The planning committee reviewed all evaluations to find common threads in which to develop a meaningful agenda for the Oregon Agritourism Summit: Part II Public Policy. Identified barriers were:

- Restricted Land use
- Confusion surrounding regulations and policy
- Difficulty to serve food on farms
- Use of existing farm buildings for agritourism
- Collaborating between counties
- Restrictions to providing overnight lodging on farms

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## OREGON AGRITOURISM SUMMIT: PART II PUBLIC POLICY

MARCH 1, 2013

### Summary

On March 1, 2013, Oregon State University Extension Service, Travel Oregon, and partners hosted the second of its two part Oregon Agritourism Summit “Getting to Yes”. Part II focused specifically on public policy and regulatory issues. This summit was intended to reach policy makers, economic development, agriculture and community organizations, and agri-business owners who are interested in working together around issues of agritourism as it relates to current interpretation of laws and farm sustainability. Goals of the summit included exploring regulatory issues affecting agritourism opportunities, collaborative problem solving, and identifying stakeholders interested in providing leadership for Oregon agritourism.

A keynote address was given by Katy Coba, director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Coba shared some of the challenges facing Oregon agriculture, including population growth, demand for food, and access to land and water for agriculture and people. She acknowledged urbanites love the idea of agriculture, they want to experience food and where food comes from. Coba cautioned that agritourism needs to be done carefully, that coexistence with traditional agriculture may be a challenge. She related that the agritourism business needs to be directly related and subordinate to the farm use. Coba also indicated that Oregon farms lag far behind WA, ID, CA in average net farm income and that we need to protect agriculture production and diversify economy.

Two panels convened, one focused on Statewide Policies affecting agritourism and the other on County Interpretation and overlays for such Policies. Small group problem solving discussions took place to shed light on four agritourism issues brought forward at the November summit. 1. On-farm lodging, 2. Food service on farms, 3. Working across county lines on agritourism projects, 4. Using farm building for agritourism businesses. The event wrapped up with presentation and discussion of options to improve the operating environment for successful agritourism in the context of existing policy and potential changes to policy.

### Overarching Themes

- Respect and appreciation that land use laws, cumbersome as they may be, have preserved Oregon’s landscape and the opportunity for people to farm today, by “preserving farmland, managing conflicts, and monitoring cumulative impact”.
- Recognition that given global and local population growth (especially in the richest agricultural soils of western Oregon), the policy context is colored by a sense of being “under threat” to the point of fear of change- that any change might unleash something wild that would undermine what we value about landscape and farming. This is not the same policy context as some other places not facing these growth pressures.

- The history of land use laws in Oregon and our growth trends have led to the current situation where there is not a cohesive agritourism policy at all. Agritourism wasn't on the map as something to consider when our original land use system was put into place.
- We want to improve the environment for agritourism that is consistent with our shared values: open landscape, farming, entrepreneurs. What should be considered?
  - Given the “threat” context, most of what is in place is intended to “stop harmful impacts” of agritourism use, rather than “promote beneficial impacts” of agritourism use.
  - Existing land use policy has proxies/measures in place that are intended to ensure agritourism stays subordinate to primary farm production use. May not be the right proxies e.g. % of sales.
  - Does the very definition of agriculture need to be updated to reflect its composition today? Land use codes governing uses in EFU seem most oriented toward larger commercial farms, which are not necessarily the typical farm today.
  - More than land use laws/regulations in play for agritourism businesses, and they can be at cross purposes, including Land use/health codes/ building codes.
  - Lack of understanding/documentation/appreciation for the economic impact of agritourism. Is agritourism something worth supporting through policy? Need to be able to demonstrate.
  - If the land use law is cracked open a little bit to allow more agritourism opportunity, will masses of farmers undertake such ventures? How many farmers want to explore agritourism businesses? What are their demographics?
  - When people talk of the educational value of agritourism, there is emotion in their voices re: the importance of keeping strong connections between people and farms, food. How is that supported by policy? For example, classes on farms- walking through fields, having a conversation, teaching. If for a fee, a permit is needed. Why?

## How individuals can take action to improve policy environment for agritourism

- Clarify understanding regarding what steps to take to open and expand an agritourism venture. Idea of a checklist from county planning departments as a needed reference.
- Build working relationships with neighbors, abutters, county officials. They have great influence on how the existing policies are interpreted.
- Know what kind of information is persuasive, including economic impact information.
- There are advocates within regulatory and planning agencies. Get to know them. They can help you navigate. Learn about agritourism successes and work with local planning officials to duplicate them.

- Asking for an exception from land use restrictions related to agritourism is not something to be avoided at all costs. Exceptions with DLCD can be somewhat flexible especially if looking at a larger collaborative project.
- Create local partnerships; make connections with neighbors and stakeholders.

### How working together can improve the policy environment for agritourism

- We need to define a clear picture of what success looks like. What are goals for an agritourism policy? Be able to speak about the project and shop it around.
- Look for ways to keep people (the voting majority) understanding and appreciating agriculture, as a majority of people are removed from farms now. Agritourism is an opportunity to provide hands-on education.
- Political influence. Consider how wineries are organized and how they have created impact. The rest of the agritourism sector is not organized.

### Potential Policy Agenda Items

- Farm stays. Potentially amend policy to allow outbuildings with conditions that prevent such buildings from being converted to freestanding permanent dwellings. Could farm stays be allowed with an annual inspection with a conditional use permit? Limit the number of stays, the type of building that is allowed like alternative lodging options such as yurts or platform tents
- Expand Senate Bill 960 to allow all agritourism operations to be eligible and/or specific problem solving, legislation around conflicting regulations. Especially around food service and education.
- Specific guidelines for agricultural use in forest land that mirror what is allowed in EFU land to the greatest degree possible.
- Limited liability for agritourism business. SB 815 slated for an interim working group by the Senate Judiciary Committee, 2013.
- Definition of agriculture and what agritourism activities are agricultural versus subordinate uses subject to restriction (and EFU applicability).

*“The face of agriculture including agritourism has changed and is continuing to change. The land use policy of forty years ago has “great bones, but the shag carpet needs to go!”*  
-a quote from County Interpretation of Policies panel discussion

## Support for Agritourism

At the conclusion of the summit, participants were given opportunity to indicate if they are willing to provide leadership in some capacity to move agritourism forward. Thirty two people responded with their contact information and specified if they would:

- Participate in a working group around statewide agritourism policies and programs
- Participate in a working group around regional agritourism policies and programs and/or
- Participate in another capacity

There is energy surrounding agritourism in Oregon and convening those stakeholders interested in identifying methods for farm businesses to move forward with inventive opportunities is needed at this time.

Agritourism is not a matter of small farms vs. large farms, or efficient farms vs. inefficient farms, but about the future of diverse farming businesses and its contributions of economic vitality to the state and its rural communities. Agritourism is one strategy to sustain farming by allowing farmers to undertake supplemental economic activity and is an attractant to new and beginning farmers by providing a supplementation income stream. Agritourism is a positive way to preserve working landscapes and connecting urbanites and future generation to those landscapes while learning about farmland stewardship and valuing quality farm products.

## Next Steps

- Identify potential funding sources for working group coordination efforts and other next steps.
- Develop statewide and regional working groups or other strategies for collective agritourism work. Evaluation data from the November summit ranks having organized agritourism systems in regions through Oregon a priority.
- OSU Extension Service will lead an effort to identify research opportunities to seek answers to some of the missing information, i.e. demographics of farms interested in agritourism, potential economic impacts.
- Develop compendium of regulations, ordinances, and permits for agritourism so that average farm/forest landowners can access this information.
- Develop a check list for new agritourism business owners.
- Explore existing resources and develop new training and support for new entrants into agritourism.

## Key Sponsors

OSU Extension Service Small Farms program and Travel Oregon sponsored the summit. The planning committee consisted of Melissa Fery, OSU Extension Service; Scottie Jones, Leaping Lamb Farm Stay; Mary Stewart, MARStewart Group; Kathi Jaworski, Write-to-Know and Travel Oregon; and Susan Labozetta.

