

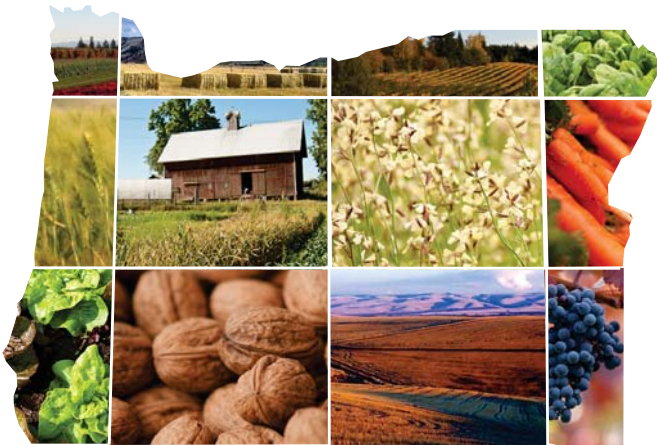
# APPENDIX: Meeting Accounts

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## THE NEW FACE OF FARMING

1000 Friends of Oregon held seven listening sessions throughout Oregon as part of the New Face of Farming initiative. Each meeting focused on land use issues that we believe have the greatest potential to impact economic opportunities for farmers and ranchers and the conservation of farmland.

In the pages that follow are the summaries of each meeting including topics covered and feedback received.



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March 2012

# Redmond, Central OR

## Demographics

This listening session had 50 attendees predominantly from small farms and ranches, but also representing some large farms and ranches, OSU Extension staff, Deschutes County employees, county Farm Bureaus, and Department of Land Conservation and Development staff. Participants were from the communities of Terrebonne, Bend, Redmond, Prineville, Madras, Culver, and Sisters.

## Overview

Redmond was our debut listening session. We were fortunate to have strong turnout from myriad vantage points of Oregon agriculture, including small to large scale farmers and ranchers, county employees, Farm Bureau members, DLCD staff, and local elected officials. Of the 50 participants, a majority were farmers who farm less than 20 acres.

### Commercial Events on EFU

We spent a significant amount of time discussing the perks and pains of allowing commercial activities to take place on Exclusive Farm Use zoned land (EFU). While there were differing opinions shared, some felt that Central Oregon's short growing season, more marginal soil, and premiums charged for acreage with a house and water rights, leave farmers and ranchers in need of opportunities to increase revenue through community-focused commercial activities such as farm dinners, farm stays, farm tours, and farming skills workshops.

To ensure that these activities are ancillary to farming, several participants suggested that permitting for events match the scale of the event. Currently, permit costs in Deschutes County are reasonable for large events and cost-prohibitive

for smaller events, participants said. As a result, rural event organizers often expand the size of their events to offset the cost of the permit, thus leading to additional noise, dust, and congestion issues in rural areas.

Several farmers voiced concern that despite existing right-to-farm laws, they fear they may be faced with the cost of defending lawsuits by neighbors hosting events, which could be financially devastating on a farm income. There was strong support for strengthening right-to-farm laws if more commercial activities are to be allowed in rural areas, to protect farmers from this risk.

### Mis-Zoned Farmland:

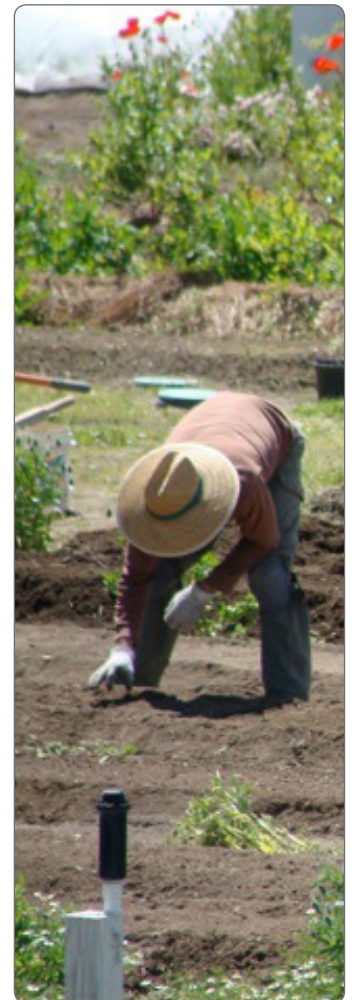
Participants in this listening session broadly agreed that a significant amount of Exclusive Farm Use-zoned land in central Oregon is actually not suitable for farming. There was broad support for creating a more effective tool for determining how land becomes classified as EFU. It was suggested that additional factors should be considered, including the number of frost-free days, whether a property is irrigable, property slope, and access to markets. Several participants stressed that properties with irrigation should remain designated for EFU no matter what.

### Lot Sizes

Many participants expressed that small farms of more than five acres can be economically viable in Central Oregon, thanks to direct-to-market practices and season-extending techniques like greenhouses and cold frames. Several participants said that with good stewardship and business practices, small acreage can be more lucrative than large acreage. The group largely felt that parcels of less than five acres should be rezoned

## Topics

- Commercial activities on EFU
- Mis-zoned farmland
- Lot sizes
- Farm stewardship



*Windflower Farm*

out of EFU as they will never make for viable farms. The group also liked the idea of creating an “enterprise zone” for small direct-to-market farms near urban centers. Additionally, many participants supported the need for more farm worker housing on small farms and expressed that while there are enough small lots, there are not enough small lots with a house and irrigation.

### Other Topics

Participants discussed farm stewardship briefly. Several participants argued for the utilization of effective tools for permanent protection of farmland from development. One such mechanism discussed was a reduction of the inheritance tax, which several participants argued can cause farmers to break up land from one generation to the next.

Participants also discussed the Farm Income Test. Many felt that the \$80,000 minimum is too high. In its place, some listening session participants endorsed an idea of creating a per-acre income minimum. This way, even farmers with a part-time jobs off the farm could more easily prove they’re really commercial operations.

Other perspectives shared in the open discussion included views that land use laws should be based on operation and not ownership of land, and that county codes need stronger “teeth” for enforcement.

# Eugene

## Demographics

This listening session had 20 attendees predominantly representing small farms and vineyards. Participants were from Veneta, Eugene, Cottage Grove, Dexter, Cheshire, and Junction City.

## Overview

The Eugene listening session participants consisted of nearly all small farmers. Among them were vintners, u-pick berry farmers, organic CSA farmers, and small dairy owners.

### Commercial Activities on EFU

Many participants supported more opportunities for small-scale commercial activities that build customer loyalty and promote community. Many are already allowed under state law. Participants did not feel that events should be limited in quantity as long as sound, traffic, and parking requirements are followed.

### Lot Sizes:

Much of the group felt that small parcels are not necessary for modern farming though small farms near urban centers can be profitable. Several participants stated that in order for a farm to be economically viable, it has to be larger than five acres.

While many participants did not feel a need for more small-farm parcels in their region, they did feel that there is a need for more farm worker and farm owner housing on small farms. It was expressed that working a small farm is very difficult when the farmer lives off of the farm, as is often the case, since emergencies can often arise at night and become magnified if left unaddressed until the following day.

This group also did not want to see farms broken up further. Rather, they supported

keeping large tracts of farmland intact for their environmental and social value. They expressed that the remaining Class 1 and 2 soils need to be protected from development and that land use laws are currently not doing enough to protect the best soils.

### Farm Stewardship

The group generally supported an easement program that pays farmers to permanently protect farmland. Several of the farmers in attendance have their land in conservation easements and expressed frustration that current models require them to pay an entity to hold their easement. Some liked the concept of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) but suggested one modification: create an opportunity for a land owner to build a cluster development on part of a farm in exchange for stripping the rights to develop the rest of the farm.

### Other Topics

During the open feedback portion of the listening session, the group stressed the need to permanently protect high-value farmland from development at any cost and asked that 1000 Friends hold listening sessions like this on an annual basis.

## Topics

- Commercial activities on EFU
- Lot sizes
- Farm stewardship





## Southern Oregon

### Topics

- Commercial activities on EFU
- Lot sizes
- Farm stewardship

### Demographics

Held in Phoenix, this listening session had 20 participants. Those present represented small and large farms, OSU Extension, Rogue Farm Corps, and Farm to Fork Events. Participants were from Phoenix, Ashland, Talent, Medford, Grants Pass, Williams, Jacksonville, Umpqua, and Eugene.

### Overview

The southern Oregon listening session attendance was split between small and large farmers. Of them, several were orchardists and others produced grain, seed, grapes, christmas trees, goats, and dairy.

#### Commercial Activities on EFU

The group was quick to point out distinctions between “activities” and “events.” They largely supported activities such as farm stands, farm visits, farm dinners, hoedowns, and u-pick berry fields, but opposed large events such as weddings, concerts and banquets. Several vintners at the listening session advocated for expanding agri-tourism, such as wine tasting, meals, and lodging for overnight stays.

Many participants recommended having permit costs reflect the scale of the activity. Currently, some participants felt, many Oregon counties have permit costs that are prohibitively expensive for small gatherings, so event organizers often feel the need to hold larger events simply to offset the permit costs.

The group expressed concern that there is too much gray area between small farmers hoping to add supplementary

income versus those using farmland primarily or exclusively for commercial uses such as permanent wedding venues. They suggested that 1000 Friends work to recognize this distinction. To enable more value-added opportunities for farmers, it was also suggested that the region invest in infrastructure for processing and refining of raw products.

#### Lot Sizes

The group largely agreed that more small lots will result in additional rural residential sprawl and would not be used for farming. Additionally, the group felt that more small parcels would adversely impact existing farms.

#### Farm Stewardship

Some participants suggested developing an easement plan that specifically protects orchard trees. Currently, participants said, mature orchard trees are being destroyed because many of large fruit buyers have gone out of business. Essentially, they said, it is often cheaper for orchardists to remove trees than maintain them, as expenses have outpaced profit margins for many pear orchardists, making it hard to stay viable.

#### Other Topics

We spent the remainder of our time in an open-ended discussion. Recommendations made by participants included better tax incentives for farmers and consumers buying local food; relaxing state regulations on meat processing; making farmers markets available in every city in Oregon; and creating urban farm zoning within urban growth boundaries.

# Corvallis

## Demographics

Approximately 40 people attended this listening session, the majority of whom were split between small and large farm owners. There were also several agriculture students present from Oregon State University. Participants were from the towns of Corvallis, Brownsville, Asea, Independence, Gaston, and Monmouth.

## Overview

### Commercial Events on EFU

This discussion was largely split along two lines: the opinion of small farmers and the opinion of large farmers.

Farmers with large operations expressed frustration with the number of commercial activities being held currently. They explained that events in particular create noise and light pollution and impact their ability to farm. They were concerned about additional traffic in the farm zone and about rural landowners claiming to farm but really only holding weddings and “growing weeds.” They strongly opposed dwellings for commercial activities, and only supported events with a strong tie to agriculture.

Meanwhile, many participants with small farms advocated for bed-and-breakfasts, farm stands and other commercial activities they believe are lower-impact. Several participants cited Europe’s agritourism model as a great example of commercial activities that are supportive of farming operations. Many supported allowing additional commercial activities including weddings, banquets, concerts, and farm-related retail operations, but felt that these activities need to be sited carefully. Several small farmers explained

that commercial activities enable them to grow their client base and stay viable.

Both groups largely agreed that permit costs for commercial activities should be consistent from one county to the next and that policies should require neighbor notification prior to issuance of a commercial activity permit.

### Lot Sizes

Many participants said that while modern farming practices do not have to be practiced on small lots, the majority of Oregon’s farms are less than 50 acres. Some small farm participants stated that many farmers market producers farm fewer than 20 acres and need or want to live on their land. Several advocated for urban farming zones where small parcels are set aside for farming within close proximity to urban areas. Other participants countered that if more small parcels are allowed, there has to be a way to ensure that they remain as farms. Participants largely agreed that more small lots are not needed because they are susceptible to development pressures and being taken out of farming.

Participants explained that small lots sell for higher prices per acre, making them hard to attain on a farmers salary. Farmers in the group recommended protecting Class 1 and 2 soils from further subdivision because once large farms are divided, they are not as likely to remain as farms, and more likely to be developed for rural residential sprawl.

Several farmers argued that any future divisions of farmland should be based on soil type. Lastly, if farms are to be broken into smaller parcels, much of the group felt that there would have to be a mechanism in place to ensure that they

### Topics

- Commercial activities on EFU
- Lot Sizes
- Farm Stewardship

are actually used for farming.

### Other Topics:

During a short discussion about farm stewardship, participants suggested several additional mechanisms for preserving farmland, including: protecting hedgerows; amending and clarifying the Property Line Adjustment law; and creating a state entity to hold farm easements. Participants also discussed strategies for making the Farm Income Test easier to meet.

## Burns

### Topics

- Lot sizes
- Mis-zoned farmland
- Farm stewardship
- Farm income test

### Demographics

This listening session had roughly 20 attendees, predominantly large-scale ranchers. Participants represented the communities of Burns, Hines and Seneca.

### Overview

#### Commercial Activities on EFU

When it comes to commercial activities on farmland, Eastern Oregon has the opposite problem of the Willamette Valley, according to participants. They said there is virtually no market for commercial activities like weddings, concerts and farm stays in Eastern Oregon, with so many acres of farmland and so few people. Without a major population center within 100 miles to support on-farm events, participants do not see events as a topic that is relevant to their situation.

However, some advocated for allowing other kinds of commercial uses on farmland: finding ways to increase economic development for ranching communities, easier access to local USDA beef processing facilities, and a reduction in estate tax rates.

#### Mis-Zoned Farmland

The group was in general agreement that areas of Exclusive Farm Use zoned land in Eastern Oregon are not good for agriculture and should be available for commercial activities unrelated to farming. Many in the group felt that farmland zoning should be determined by multiple factors such as soil class, cultural issues, whether land is irrigable, and the viewshed that surrounds the property.

#### Farmland Stewardship

Some participants supported the concept of conservation easements but suggested

that a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program could be helpful is to allow for a cluster of homes on one section of a ranch so that multiple generations of a ranching family can live near each other, instead of having to be 160 acres apart. By doing this, development rights would be stripped from other parcels to account for the number of homes in the cluster.

A participant explained that in the Burns area, any lot with the ability to build a house is worth the same regardless of its size and every lot that can have a house is getting one. This creates an incentive to parcelize large ranches by selling 160 acre parcels with the right to build a house. To address this situation, some participants felt, TDRs should be employed for clustering homes so that smaller amounts of land are lost to residential uses. Additional feedback on the topic of farm easements included: ensuring the economic viability of easement programs; allowing development rights to be sold; and finding a easement funding mechanism that does not include tax money.

#### Other Topics

During the additional feedback segment of this listening session, two notable topics arose. The first was that estate taxes pose a threat to working land as it transitions from one generation to the next. To ensure that the next generation is able to take over the farm, some participants felt the government should provide positive tax incentives. The second was that the next generation of farmers want to have a house on the same ranch as their family, but want it to be a separate parcel so they can begin accumulating equity instead of just paying rent.

# Northern Willamette Valley/ Portland Metro

## Demographics

This listening session, held in Wilsonville, had nearly 40 attendees. Some were from large, multi-generation farms, some were from small farms, and some were young farmers interested in purchasing their own small farm. Participants were from the communities of Aurora, Portland, Yamhill, Woodburn, Wilsonville, Aumsville, Hubbard, Salem, Molalla, Dayton, Gaston, and Seattle, Washington.

## Overview

Participants at this listening session were a mix of small and large farmers. They were also a combination of new farmers and lifetime long farmers. This dichotomy created an interesting dynamic: at times the young farmers were making recommendations to the seasoned farmers about new business models to consider, and at other times, the experienced farmers were advising young farmers on how to temper their eagerness to own land with the notion that owning a farm is a long-term investment.

### Lot Sizes

During this discussion, many of the young farmers expressed a desire to own a small farm with good soil, irrigation, and a house. They explained that rural residential competition for these properties, especially those of 20 acres or less, has inflated prices and reduced attainability for young people trying to break into farming.

Many of the veteran farmers countered with questions about why small farmers felt they had to live on the farm while starting out. They suggested leasing land at first, to get a feel for the size of farm they will want to operate and buy. One veteran farmer said that agriculture

should emulate commercial business models in that the owner leases a small commercial space and grows into something larger over time. Often, the owner lives away from their business.

Yet the newer farmers explained that emergencies can happen at night and by the time a farmer living off of the farm arrives in the morning, the damage has already been done—damage that could have been avoided if the farmer lived on the farm. By the end of this conversation three recommendations were made by participants: develop a mentorship program for new farmers to help them get the right fit for lease or purchase of a farm; create new mechanisms to protect small farms near urban areas from conversion to rural residential sprawl; and create a small-acreage lease “pilot project.”

### Property Line Adjustments

Many participants in the listening session agreed the law is too nebulous and that clarification is needed as to what the goal of this law is. Several Yamhill County residents acknowledged that PLAs are more of an issue around Forest Template Dwellings and that they have not seen many abuses on farmland.

### Farm Income Test

Several of the young farmers expressed frustration with the Farm Income Test. According to them, the \$80,000 minimum is too high to enable a small farmer to qualify to build a home on their farm income alone. Some suggested coming up with some way to allow a cooperative model for multiple farmers to build homes on one small parcel. To avoid having the property be subdivided by future owners, they suggested a requirement that multiple homes would have to share one kitchen. This way, speculators

## Topics

- Lot sizes
- PLAs
- Farm income test
- Farm Stewardship



would be disinterested in parcelizing the farm.

### Farm Stewardship

Much of the group was generally skeptical of transfer of development rights (TDR) programs working on a large scale because there are so many acres zoned Exclusive Farm Use that it would be hard to track sales of development credits. In order for TDRs to work on a large scale, some in the group proposed writing easements into property deeds, requiring that neighbors be informed of such transactions, and increasing state tax benefits for any farmers willing to do this.

### Other Topics

During the open feedback component of this listening session, recommendations from the group included that farming be encouraged in every way possible and that the list of commercial activities permitted on farmland be refined as there are currently too many activities allowed. Some in the group supported allowing farm-based educational events and the creation of easy-to-follow guidelines for farmers interested in filing for permits for these events. Others encouraged legalizing farm internships and volunteer workers on farms and supported protecting Oregon's Right to Farm law.

# Hood River County

## Demographics

20 people attended this listening session held in the community of Parkdale/Mt. Hood. The majority of participants were from small to mid-sized fruit orchards. Participants were from Hood River and Parkdale/Mt. Hood.

## Overview

### Property Line Adjustments

We began this listening session by discussing Property Line Adjustments and whether or not there were local examples of people taking advantage of the law to subdivide farms. This group felt strongly that the PLA laws have been exploited, and that the law is too subjective and very hard to monitor. Several examples were shared of farmers applying for a PLA, then building a second home on the farm as soon as the PLA was approved.

Many participants argued that more houses in the farm zone will only amount to more tension between neighbors. A number of stories were told about people who move onto small farm lots to “live in the country” but end up in conflict with farming neighbors because the latter make noise, kick up dust, and spray chemicals. Others said that hobby farmers are pricing “real” farmers out of buying small farms. To remedy this, participants suggested creating loans that are easy to access for young farmers who want to fix up existing housing/farm worker housing.

### Commercial Activities on EFU

There was support among some meeting participants for activities such as direct-market sales, farmers markets, farm stays,

farm dinners, agri-tourism and CSA’s. It was expressed that these business models can strengthen customer relationships with farmers and create customer loyalty.

Several farmers spoke in support of holding weddings as a way of generating enough revenue to survive a bad growing season. They explained that weddings and other commercial activities can keep employees working year round.

Opposition to commercial activities was voiced by others, who feared they could replace farming in the long run and therefore need strong sideboards to monitor their effect on agriculture. Several argued that parceling and commercial activities must be secondary to farming. Additionally, some who opposed commercial activities in the farm zone stated that the events code should be determined by the community and not an out-of-town governing body. This way, the community has a say in what is permitted.

### Other Topics

During the open discussion, the group stressed the need to keep all remaining high value farmland for farming and not allow it to be developed. Some argued that Oregon land use law should better accommodate conservation easements and similar tools. Several farmers said that there is very little prime farmland left in the world and as stewards of the land, it is the responsibility of farmers to keep this land from being divided or developed.

## Topics

- PLAs
- Commercial Activities on EFU