

**Oregon Statewide Agritourism Working Group
Inaugural Meeting
Thursday, March 20, 2014, 9am-12pm
Food Innovation Center, 1207 NW Naito Parkway, Portland**

Attendees:

Jeanne Carver, Imperial Stock Ranch
Bill Cross, Farming lobbyist
Ann Forsthoefel,
Allison George, Washington County Visitor Association
Thomas Hogue, Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development
Barb Iverson, Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm and Farm Bureau Officer
Scottie Jones, Leaping Lamb Farms/Farm Stay US
Sally McAleer, Travel Lane County
Susie Miles, Imperial River Company
David Perry, Zenger Farm
Erika Polmar, Plate and Pitchfork
Mary Stewart, Clackamas County agritourism
Blake Van Roekel, Get Dirty Farm Tours
Kieron Weidner, Independent Oregon based guide
Amanda Welker, Oregon Dept of Agriculture
Erik Wolf, World Food Travel Association

Phone attendees:

David Blair, Travel Oregon Tourism Commission
Mike Brandt, Yamhill County Planning Director
Sara Miller, Northeast Oregon Economic Development District
John Stehlik, Mt. Hood Winery/Hood River Fruit Loop
Kara Wilson, Wilson Ranches B&B

Travel Oregon Staff:

Kristin Dahl, Destination Development Director
Nastassja Pace, Destination Development Specialist
Harry Dalgaard, Destination Development Specialist
Linda Andrews, Destination Development Coordinator
Kevin Wright, Vice President of Global Marketing
Mo Sherifdeen, Director, Global Integrated Marketing
Holly Macfee, Vice President, Brand Strategy, Global Marketing
Greg Eckhart, Manager, Global Sales

Facilitator:

Kathi Jaworski, Write to Know Consulting

I. GOALS FOR THE DAY & FUTURE MEETINGS:

- Bringing stakeholders together to help build agritourism in Oregon and create a vision to move forward
- Share what Travel Oregon is doing around agricultural/culinary tourism
 - Primarily marketing, ad campaigns to date
- Why Travel Oregon is working on this now
 - Been convening stakeholders around bike-tourism for 10 years and seen a ton of momentum and successes; would like to help work on agritourism in similar way – we heavily market the culinary aspect of agritourism, but also want to work to develop and promote agritourism more comprehensively
 - We know that Oregon land-use laws create challenges for some types of agritourism
 - Focus on “Collective Impact” (*Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2011*): Bringing together broad based stakeholders to strategizing collaboratively on large-scale, complex initiatives for a common goal—in this case, strengthening farms and communities through high quality agritourism development.
 - Travel Oregon will act as a convener and leader, however the working group, and you leaders, will hopefully work to implement strategies/plans/vision developed in this group

IIA. THE STATE OF AGRITOURISM IN OREGON:

Current Travel Oregon role and activities

- Have 3 content areas of work: Marketing, Sales and Development
- Development side:
 - Working in rural communities to help them catalyze their areas of interest; primarily bike tourism, outdoor recreation and agritourism.
 - Statewide and regional initiatives, such as Rural Tourism Studio
- Marketing side:
 - Already heavily focus on Oregon’s bountiful culinary/agricultural assets
 - 11th year of campaign Oregon Bounty – primarily push in fall
 - Ad/TV spots
 - Online content/visitor guide
 - Key partnerships for culinary/ag – Alaska Airlines “wines fly free!”, Feast Food Festival and State “food” Associations & Guilds
- Sales side:
 - “Sell” Oregon to international guides/tours – driving market strategy is paid media
 - International media then drives demand for guides/tours – internationally many people heavily rely on guide/tour companies
 - Largest overseas market : Canada, Japan, Germany and China

Other initiatives, recent and current

- Little in the way of Oregon specific market data about agritourism, though there are some recent studies related to Culinary Tourism
 - Vast majority of culinary tourists are “accidental”- they come for other reasons, but are open to discovering great food, drink and stories while traveling

- There is a core of folks who specifically travel for culinary experiences, and Oregon is a very attractive destination
- Recent Oregon Agritourism Summit sponsored by Oregon State University Small Farms Program. Issues identified include:
 - “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 in place . . . What is in place is intended to ‘stop harmful impacts’ rather than ‘promote beneficial impacts’ of agritourism”
 - High cost of liability insurance; issue addressed in other states
 - Visibility/marketing
 - Permitting (land use, health) especially variable in implementation at the county level
- Wine industry’s inroads with recent legislation to allow events and other associated activities (SB960)
- More flexible legislation recently regarding home-processed food sold in farmer’s markets (HB2336)
 - Farmers Markets draw tourists- in Portland in peak season see 38% of out of state attendees
- County level initiatives
 - Implementing HB960 reforms- Yamhill, Deschutes, Clackamas
 - Not land use specific- Wallowa, Columbia Gorge
- Many other states have developed innovative approaches that we can learn from (see Phase I report)
 - Marketing support
 - Business certification
 - Business development
 - Fostering networks
 - Research
 - Policy advocacy
 - Destination development

IIB. OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES (SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS)

Guiding principles for conversation

- *Build recommendations on what works/existing strengths*
 - *What agritourism is already happening successfully in Oregon?*
 - *What has contributed to that success?*
 - *How can we amplify that success?*
 - *Where are the critical gaps*
- *Pursue long term strategies as well, but don’t get bogged down in ‘what can’t happen’*
- *Look at what can be implemented through collaboration.*

Successes

- Opportunity to look at the winery side and take lessons learned/successes from how they’ve developed
 - Wineries and breweries are robust and growing
 - Wineries have achieved a lot, but there are some splits too- not all agree on strategy

- Oregon Wine Board a major lobby force, successful
- Success with corn mazes/pumpkin patches/ you-pick/farmers markets /loop tours (e.g. Fruit Loop)
- Our market is well-differentiated as authentic and intimate for culinary tourism (unlike CA)
- Could possibly mirror how the state assists with recruitment of film and video – assistance with getting permits and getting started
- Replicate the best-practices from counties who have smart agritourism policy – Yamhill has done a great job with this (Erika Polmar)
 - Took their home based business statute and allow for 9 bedroom B&Bs now
 - Erika has seen a huge shift in how easy it is to do business in Yamhill
 - Deschutes County's process is the best with having one point of contact that helps you through the process

Issues

- Could be some confusion – are we marketing agritourism experiences or culinary experience? There's an urban and a rural – they may differ in how you communicate
- Definition of agritourism – can it encompass foraging, fishing? Can it key into lavender and nursery products
 - Travelers experience of working landscapes, where the traveler directly connects with the grower, rancher or fisherman vs. being three steps removed as in some urban culinary tourism (Jeanne)
 - Not only land based but also water based?
 - We tend to think of farms as farms, but need to think about the entire ecosystem so need to bring in aqua cultural opportunities
 - Oyster, fishing, coastal opportunities
- Not a lot of cohesiveness among all the different assets/products
- Big agriculture vs. small agriculture. Perception of that relationship needs to shift. It's currently perceived that small farms are difficult (?) because they are new kid on the block in terms of working with Dept of Ag.
- Multiple agencies are accrediting Oregon-grown food – too many options – not a good branding model
 - we are one of only two states that doesn't have an overarching state brand, it is hard to do well
- A lot of people stretched thin to keep businesses afloat
- On-going need for education for businesses not just in agritourism, but other tourism industry and community
- High cost of Liability insurance
- Existing land use policy – implemented county by county makes it difficult to have a statewide program to support agritourism business – have to navigate 30 some different
 - SB 960 is in direct conflict with recent court of appeals policy
 - Permitting – is a county by county issue, it is very unclear and cumbersome
 - Land-use policy issues –event permits issues, tents, farm stays – understanding and easily identifying the income you can have from growing, staying, etc
 - Cannot have tents on property or platforms for viewing purposes – makes impossible to do events. Example of this Oregon Case is Bela Organics.

- Commercial use issues on farmland needs to be solved
- Lots of demand, but we cannot provide lawfully. Has to be under the table. And that's not good practice.
- Definitional issues for farmers and what they sell, how much money is coming directly vs. how much selling is hard for many
- County laws are different than statewide and makes really confusing
- How to look at sustainability and achieve goals of growing in marketplace while being sustainable
- Farm entity has a cap on how much their supplemental income can be and it's relatively low – so curbs innovation and growth of these other entrepreneurial efforts. Opportunity to address this (see next section).
 - Currently policy is not conducive to allow Woofers
- Viability of family farms at risk
 - Business succession on family farms
 - Prices of crops constantly changing
- Need data to show farmers that it's worth energy; time to have agritourism added into business model – how can they know this is worth it to them – what's the tipping point of when you actually make a profit?
- Way finding – how do tourists/guests find farms
 - Signage needed, but neighbors may have issues with it

Opportunities

- Broad interest in learning about Oregon agriculture
 - People come here to see how we do agriculture
 - Diverse options- Oregon has the quilt of small farms; More diversity of businesses popping up, fruit companies for example
 - Market for more experiential tours –
 - Harvest
 - Green/sustainable focus – understanding where food comes from
 - Hops & winery tours – people are interested in what's going in their glass
 - American & Canadians (our largest tourism market) are particularly interested
 - Great interest in culinary tourism/urban agriculture from the Japanese market – particularly with the 'young' farms
 - I want to learn how to do this in my own home – the DIY element
 - Greener / cleaner cuisine – we do food here that tends to be healthy due to clean soil, clean water, and clean air. We also have a lot of organic inputs. People talk about how good the food tastes here. Could highlight this angle in our marketing. Products don't travel far to market.
 - Would need to be careful with language
 - Sustainable landscape management reputation- could build upon industry and technical tours
 - Opportunity to share more real stories, not just the success and pretty ones, but the ones about how partaking in agritourism saves small farms, communities, families
 - Target big Oregon companies with international visitors to encourage them to participate in agritourism- reverse of Whole Foods campaign that encourages locals to visit countries

- where foods are from. Whole Foods' Whole Journeys –why not do that in Oregon?
<http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/blog/whole-journeys-way-travel-should-taste>
- Farm stays- room for more in market, potential as viable income generator for farms
 - Huge demand for Farm Stays
 - Integrating sustainability goals into tourism products and services
 - Signage and itineraries
 - Expand crop signage program – identifying what is growing
 - More way finding and signage
 - Lots of opportunity for maps, itineraries/trails, signage, digital maps, phone apps, statewide agritourism website, etc (Oregon Country Trails already doing some itineraries)
 - not all through mobile apps since some areas don't have coverage
 - Integrating wineries into loop tours (e.g. fruit loop) = new product
 - See experiential tours above
 - Growing international markets / Young generations
 - Promotion
 - Marketing the “real” stories of farmers & the economic impact /not just romanticize
 - Opportunity: craft a marketing messages that are two-fold → one message to agritourism opportunities (rural), one message to culinary (urban)
 - *However, a couple in the group didn't agree with this perspective and felt differently – that they're just two sides to the same coin and blurring the lines will be more productive*
 - Opportunity to tell the more systemic story – the Nature Conservancy land that was protected, healthier native species, ranch on land leads to great beef, better rangeland management practices. Zumwalt Prairie is a great example
 - Richer back stories on why Oregon is the way that it is
 - “Fly Your Tree Free’ – (ha ha) to tie into Christmas Tree industry
 - Agritourism assets across the state are not uniformly visible- could clustering geographic assets regionally for marketing
 - Asset/product mapping – see where clusters are, but where gaps are, where capacity is an issue (for example, if only 2 rooms in one whole area then how can achieve Tours/Groups)
 - We have a real opportunity to expose people to our cultural heritage as well like the Pendleton Round-Up example
 - Already existing agricultural networks/groups that we can work with. They're not addressing agritourism opportunities yet. This network or quilt is so rich so there is a strong launching pad for getting involvement :
 - Creating large unified lobbying voice – build statewide coalition (get large NGOs, education programs, agencies)
 - Partner with Oregon Agritourism Partnership – the new NGO that is forming a 501©3 (Clackamas County Tourism is involved)
 - Learn from winery expertise e.g org structures in place
 - Tie restoration and farm protection into econ dev strategy (longer term) e.g econ impact of addressing high liability costs, fixing regulatory hurdles
 - Opportunity to help farmers assess potential for agritourism activities

- Assessing economic impacts on individual farmers and when does it make sense for my business – is it economically viable – why should I take this leap
- Education for community overall and outreach to neighbors to understand what is happening
- Educate more farmers about the opportunity for Farm Stays and the economic impact
- Agritourism has the ability to support this network of small farms, diversity, etc
- Are there alternative legal structures for some agritourism businesses e.g nonprofit?
- Taking best policies from counties permitting that work well and using it to promote
 - Idea- ombudsman to help navigate permitting, compile best practice policies to promote
- Developing new definition for agritourism in Oregon (see “issues” above)
- One clearing house website for all things agritourism
 - Consolidate listings of agritourism attractions
- Longer term
 - Tie in well to the larger Cascadia food shed and other subjects – water, conservation, heritage, environment
 - Long term – restoration and farm protection to achieve economic impact assessment (opportunity for future research)
 - Large water shed and food shed in the west – have the opportunity to work regionally – north from Vancouver BC over to Montana. Opportunity to work
 - Opportunity for restoration coupled with economic development. Benefits included – land restoration and protection
 - Opportunity to grow as a leader in this sector of our economy – other states will be looking to Oregon to lead in this
 - Other states are doing great, careful that they don’t outpace Oregon as a leader – Vermont, North Carolina, Nebraska, etc
 - Opportunity to influence water use policy by being able to recognize the impact (or potential impact) of agritourism

Questions

- Criteria for being on TravelOregon.com – how do you get listed?
 - Work with your local destination marketing organization (DMO) and Oregon Restaurant Lodging Assoc. (ORLA) – we pull listings from their data
- I’m in front-line tour guide/sales – How do I know the process for Alaska Airlines “Wines Fly Free?”
 - Opportunity to do outreach to front line professionals so that they are aware of key promotions that they can publicize
- Where can I find all this agritourism initiative information?
 - We’ll make a page/section on Industry.TravelOregon.com and send out that URL by end of March

III. LONG TERM VISION FOR OREGON AGRITOURISM

Preliminary conversation

Technical snafu: the notes from this part of the meeting were lost into cyberspace. We are so sorry! Will revisit this topic at the next meeting

IV. EXAMPLES OF OTHER STATEWIDE AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Given time constraints, did not spend much time on this agenda item. Highlighted the following promising approaches:

- Dig In Vermont- strong role for associations, user friendly website, similar products
- Colorado Agritourism- overarching plan, ties with cultural tourism as a strategy for funding, data

Web sites for these projects to be provided as follow up: information about activities in other states is included in Phase I Agritourism Scan report.

V. NEXT STEPS

Homework before next meeting:

- Consider the definition of agritourism- how wide do we cast the net?
- Review two reports that were sent out prior to this meeting, and will also be on the agritourism page referenced below to be set up for this effort
 - Agritourism Summit
 - Oregon's agritourism landscape- Phase I report
- Respond to follow up inquiry re vision for agritourism in Oregon
- Consider who else should be at the table- we will check back with you for names before the next meeting.

Travel Oregon will add to website

- an agritourism page for the working group (on the industry side of the site)
- links to existing research
- meeting notes
- Links to other great agritourism websites
- Meeting materials/reports to review
- List of invitees

Emails related to this project will be sent from Travel Oregon's Linda Andrews until the webpage is set up