

OREGON AGRITOURISM STEERING COMMITTEE | MEETING SUMMARY

October 2, 2018 | Portland, Oregon

ATTENDEES

Scottie Jones, Leaping Lamb Farm/US Farmstay Association
Sadie Carney, Department of Land Conservation & Development
Melissa Fery, OSU Extension
Kelly Crane, OR Farmers Market Association
Erick Garman, ODA
Janet Dodson, EOVA
Aaron Liersemann, Mt. Hood Territory
Erika Polmar, Plate and Pitchfork / Travel Oregon
Mark Ellsworth, Governor's Office, Regional Solutions
Bree Boskov, Oregon Wine Board
Shari Sirkin, Friends of Family Farmers
Jeanne Carver, Imperial Stock Ranch
Sara Morrissey, Travel Oregon
Scott Bricker, Travel Oregon
Hilary Sager, Travel Oregon

DEFINING AGRITOURISM

Agricultural Tourism, or agritourism, is the name of the sector that integrates farm and ranch enterprises with the travel and recreational sectors of our economy. Agritourism covers a wide variety of recreational, educational and other leisure activities and services, based on a farmer's or rancher's land, physical and human resources. Agritourism offers consumers unique leisure, educational and recreation experiences that they value and are willing to pay for. The wide range of activities covered under agritourism can be placed into three categories:

1. Activities that take place directly on the farm or ranch, including:

- Farm or ranch work experience (roundup, branding, haying, fencing, calving, etc.)
- U-pick operations for harvesting fruits, vegetables, Christmas trees
- Farm Stands
- Guided tour of farm or ranch operation
- Hay rides and horseback riding
- Farm Stays
- Stay at a dude ranch

- Special events such as weddings, retreats, family reunions, meetings
 - Farm to table events
 - Corn mazes, wagon rides, children’s camps
 - Seeing and feeding farm animals
 - Hunting and fishing, either guided or unguided
 - Educational tours and activities
 - Photography and painting
 - Bird-watching and wildlife viewing
 - Snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, off-road motorcycling, mountain-biking
2. **Activities that are operated by farmers and ranchers, that tend to be food-based and that may or may not take place on the farm or ranch include:**
- Harvest and food festivals
 - Farmers markets
 - Winery tours and tastings
 - Microbrewery visits
 - Visits to food processing sites that make cheese, jam or cider, for example
3. **Activities that celebrate farm or ranch heritage and history, and that may or may not take place on the farm or ranch include:**
- Barn dances, hoedowns, square dancing
 - Visits to historical museums and sites that describe agricultural history, pioneer treks and settlements, farm machinery
 - Rodeos, stock shows, county fairs or other events showcasing the ag industry

Culinary Tourism is defined as “the pursuit of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences” and thus there is a significant intersection with agritourism. The Steering Committee acknowledges, however, that there are numerous visitor-worthy agricultural experiences in Oregon that are not edible.

Additionally, there are working definitions of agritourism in both Oregon Revised Statutes and DLCDC model code that should inform any work the committee pursues in advancing statewide policy. Those definitions are:

1. Agritourism activity means an activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, wineries, ranching and historical, cultural or harvest-your-own activities or natural activities and attractions.

An activity is an agritourism activity whether or not the participant paid to participate in the activity.

2. Agritourism: A common, farm-dependent activity that promotes agriculture, any income from which is incidental and subordinate to a working farm. Such uses may include hay rides, corn mazes and other similar uses that are directly related to on-site agriculture. Any assembly of persons shall be for the purpose of taking part in agriculturally-based activities such as animal or crop care, tasting farm products or learning about farm or ranch operations. Agritourism may include farm-to-plate meals. Except for small, farm-themed parties, regularly occurring celebratory gatherings, weddings, parties or similar uses are not agritourism.

OAN STEERING COMMITTEE PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Oregon Agritourism Steering Committee will serve for one year to develop an Action Plan for advancing agritourism in Oregon and lead its implementation. While the definition of agritourism is broad, this Steering Committee will focus on identifying the tools and policy changes needed for agritourism to allow people to experience local landscapes where food, clothing and shelter is produced, foraged, and caught, and to meet the people behind this work.

The Action Plan will advance the priorities established at the July 10th meeting as amended by the Steering Committee. They are:

1. **Improve coordination** across agencies and organizations to support the sustainable development of agritourism. *Action steps:*
 - a. Develop a scan of the roles and activities of agencies and organizations working on agritourism.
 - b. Develop a process to improve collaboration among state agencies, associations and organizations; build support for increased resources for both agencies and organizations to lead on agritourism.
2. **Build a better understanding and increased support for agritourism in Oregon.** *Action steps:*
 - a. Develop a communications strategy aimed at educating county and regional agencies and policy makers about the benefits of agritourism, the associated activities that are currently permissible, challenges to running successful operations, and solutions to these challenges.
 - b. Gather economic impact data and trends to bolster this work.
3. **Support agritourism business** to improve current, establish new, and expand existing operations. *Action steps:*

- a. Provide operators with opportunities to network, learn and gain assistance with business planning from other operators and resources providers.
 - b. Offer technical assistance to establishing and operating agritourism businesses so that they can effectively navigate and comply with laws, codes and permitting requirements.
4. Explore **statewide and county-level land use policy issues and structural barriers and propose solutions as needed** to growing a robust agritourism economy in Oregon.
- Action steps:*
- a. Advocate for codes and rules that support agritourism while maintaining integrity for agricultural lands and respecting key farming activities; build on the communication strategy (2.a.).
 - b. Establish a set of best practices to support counties in bringing their codes to current standards.
 - c. Encourage counties to set up an easy-to-understand, transparent and streamlined process for businesses and operators to legally operate their agritourism business.

INTERAGENCY and ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION

Following a discussion among the Steering Committee, we arrived at two key objectives around how to improve collaboration between agencies and organizations:

1. Grow recognition of importance and support of agritourism in the state (including by state and local agencies and organizations)
2. Determine at a state agency level, which agency is doing what, identifying best path forward for collaboration between these efforts

SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

Two years ago, we developed and delivered a workshop on agritourism in advance of the Small Farms Conference. We are looking to do the same in 2019, by hosting an Oregon Agritourism Network meeting on the Friday before Small Farms Conference; the Small Farms Conference is on Saturday Feb. 23rd.

We are also pursuing the opportunity to host 2-3 sessions during the conference. OSU recommended that tangible and applicable workshops will be more useful than inspirational content. From the agritourism survey, we know that operators are seeking assistance around understanding risk & liability (technical support) and marketing assistance. With this guidance in mind, a small group has formed within the Steering Committee to work on developing ideas for these sessions. Session proposals are due by October 30.