

Oregon State Board of Agriculture
May 18-19, 2021

Agenda Item 05 - Written Public Comments

Item	Name	Topic	Date Received
Item 01	Greg Holmes 1000 Friends of Oregon	Resolution 314	05/12/2021
Item 02	Samantha Bayer Oregon Farm Bureau	Resolution 266 Resolution 314	05/12/2021
Item 03	Aileen Kaye	Resolution 314	05/18/2021

Board of Agriculture Resolutions under current review:

266 – Collective Bargaining for Agricultural Workers and Employers

314 – Permitted uses on lands zoned exclusive farm use and on high-value farmland agricultural land



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12 May, 2021

Chair Stephanie Hallock, and Members
Oregon Board of Agriculture
635 Capitol St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Regarding: **Proposed Revisions to Board Resolution #314: Permitted Uses on Lands Zoned Exclusive Farm Use and on High-Value Farmland**

Dear Chair Hallock and Members of the Oregon Board of Agriculture,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of the Board of Agriculture making a bold statement by adopting the proposed text of Resolution #314, "Permitted Uses on Lands Zoned Exclusive Farm Use and on High-Value Farmland." 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that has worked with Oregonians for more than 45 years to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choices. We created our Food Systems Program in 2015 to expand our work with partner organizations throughout the state that are working together to build and strengthen robust and healthy food systems across Oregon.

Agriculture is one of the strongest sectors of Oregon's economy year over year, including in periods of general economic downturn. The ability of this economic powerhouse to continue is heavily dependent on the continued availability of appropriate land. In Oregon most of that land is designated with "Exclusive Farm Use" (EFU) zoning. However, as documented in our recent report entitled [*Death by 1000 Cuts*](#), the list of non-farm-related uses allowed of EFU land has grown to the point where both the numbers of uses and the lack of analysis for compatibility with agriculture are putting profitable farming in jeopardy in locations across the state.

These realities are recognized in the proposed draft revisions for Resolution #314. We support adoption of the language you have been presented without weakening.

There is one area that we recommend the Board consider taking just a little further. The proposed language rightly emphasizes the importance of high-value farmland to the economy. However, it could be read by an audience that is less familiar with agriculture in the state to imply that non-high-value farmland does not produce high economic value and is thus not

worthy of similar protections. To the contrary, Cattle & Calves and Hay are two of the highest value crops in Oregon year after year, yet they often grown on lesser quality soils. These operations require large blocks of farmland that are absent of conflicting uses in order to survive and thrive. Similar arguments can be made of the soils that produce many wine grapes, some of our orchards, and other crops in the top 10 in value.¹ Yet because the soils that these products grow on are not considered “high value” and are in some cases not even irrigated, they are often the target of proposals for reduced protections to allow other, often conflicting, uses.

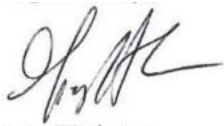
For these reasons, we ask the Board to consider adding one additional “Whereas” clause just before the last one, to the effect of the following:

Whereas many of Oregon’s top 10 crops, including Cattle and Calves, are raised on non-high-value and often non-irrigated soils that also need protection from conflicting uses;

We respectfully urge the Board to adopt a strong statement on the importance of protecting all farmland as it renews its commitment to Resolution #314.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,



Greg Holmes
Food Systems Program Director
1000 Friends of Oregon

¹ See *Oregon Agricultural Statistics, September 2020*, accessed May 12 at <https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/Administration/ORAgFactsFigures.pdf>



OREGON
FARM
BUREAU

Locally Grown
and
GROWING STRONG

May 12, 2021

Karla Valness
Oregon Department of Agriculture
VIA Email: kvalness@oda.state.or.us

Re: Board of Agriculture Resolutions May 2021

Vice-Chair Harper, Members of the Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Board of Agriculture's review of board resolutions. By way of background, the Oregon Farm Bureau is the state's largest agricultural trade association, representing nearly 7,000 farm and ranch families from across the state.

We greatly appreciate the Board and Department's work over the past several months to review proposed resolutions and improve the process. Additionally, we appreciate the Board taking public comment into consideration and refining resolutions to better serve agriculture and agricultural workers in the state, including the proposed changes to resolution #266. With that said, OFB is concerned about the Board's continued focus on permitted uses on lands zoned exclusive farm use, and strongly urge the Board to put aside this discussion until the state of emergency related to COVID-19 has been rescinded.

As we stated in our last comment letter to the Board on past resolution #314, our membership has faced unprecedented challenges associated with COVID-19 response, wildfires, farm labor shortages, and other challenges which have kept them busy on their farms and have create barriers to effective participation in Farm Bureau's grassroots process. As such, we have not been able to bring our membership together in person since the February 2020 to have the critical conversations we need to have to provide a formal position on board resolutions that may be controversial within our membership, including resolution #314.

Irrespective of land use impacts that can stem from purely non-farm uses in the farm zone, agritourism opportunities and direct farm sales are of immense importance to our membership and farmers across the state. The economic viability of agricultural enterprises in Oregon is uncertain. While many Oregonians are living in immense fear of a recession due to COVID-19, the

reality is that the agricultural industry has already been in a recession for a number of years. Commodity prices are at record lows, long standing contracts have been canceled, and trade disruptions have upended many aspects of our agricultural commodities. To push resolutions forward that could prevent agritourism opportunities, without the ability of the agricultural community to fully discuss the impacts of these policies or consider the economic reality of agricultural businesses in the state, is irresponsible and unnecessary at this time.


To be clear, we fully understand that there are land use impacts that stem from expanding non-farm uses in the farm zone, and believe that there must be appropriate sideboards on non-farm activities (including agritourism activities) to ensure that existing agricultural operations are not negatively impacted. The problem is that we have not been able to come together to discuss what these side boards should actually be.

Moreover, from reading the resolution, we are unclear of any time certain issue that requires the Board to take action on this subject matter at this point in time. We have a robust land use system, DLCD, and an entire appellate court dedicated to land use planning that can address immediate land use issues. The Board and the Department should have more than enough time to have a necessary and collaborative conversation with the farming community on this issue, and does not need to push this resolution through.

For these reasons, we strongly encourage the Board to put aside resolution #314 indefinitely and to engage the agricultural industry in a more involved and robust conversation about what is the best policy for agricultural enterprises in the state of Oregon when it comes to non-farm uses in the farm zone.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments today. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Samantha Bayer
Policy Counsel
Oregon Farm Bureau
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From: Aileen Kaye arkaye2@gmail.com 
Subject: Res. 314 Permitted uses on EFU/high value farmland
Date: May 18, 2021 at 3:46 PM
To: Karla Valness kvalness@oda.state.or.us

AK

Dear State Board of Agriculture,

I feel the numbers and types of uses permitted on EFU and high value farmland has gone overboard. I fear we are losing ground that should be used for crops/livestock.

I have several examples, but I will give you two today:

1. Two properties from me in south Marion County, 12 acres of land that was used for vegetables, fruit, cows, sheep, and hay is now a junk yard. The farmer died and the land was sold to someone in the business of hay taping. The businessman uses this farmland to store his equipment and also trucks and other items not even needed for his business. NOTHING is grown now on this property. He is using EFU land as industrial land. See photos below.
2. Last year a land speculator submitted a conditional use permit application for 39 acres of UFU for a CBD oil chemical processing plant and statewide distribution center. NO crop was going to be grown on this property. After seeing the local outrage, the speculator withdrew his permit.

The term "related to farm use" is not taken seriously. This needs to be addressed.

Thank you for your concern.

Aileen Kaye
Turner area





