

Bills would ease new dwellings on farmland

Critics say the proposals would disrupt agriculture

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Two bills aimed at expanding affordable housing in rural Oregon would make it easier to build dwellings or permanently reside in recreational vehicles on farmland.

Advocates of House bills 2937 and 2938 say the proposals would help mitigate the state's housing shortage without undermining protections for farmland.

However, critics argue the bills would disrupt agricultural operations without having much impact on housing and could be counterproductive by encouraging short-term rentals.

"It's just not the best use of farmland," said Mary Anne Nash, public policy counsel for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

Proponents of the bills said lawmakers need to be creative in finding solutions to Oregon's housing problem.

There are limits to what can be accomplished with legislation focused on landlord-tenant relations, said Julie Parrish, R-West Linn, during a March 14 legislative hearing.

"It doesn't put new units in the mix," she said.

Oregon's land use system was intended to preserve farmland but not to create insufficient housing and perpetuate homelessness, Parrish said.

Meanwhile, HB 2937 and 2938 have restrictions that limit new dwellings and won't "upset the land use apple cart in any significant way," she said.

Under HB 2937, a single "accessory dwelling" can be sited within 100 feet of an existing home in a rural residential zone, or in a "exclusive farm use" zone with a county conditional use permit.

The same conditions apply to a single recreational vehicle used for "residential purposes" under HB 2938.

County governments can decide whether or not to incorporate these provisions into their land use plans and they're also free to place additional restrictions on accessory dwellings and recreational vehicles sited in farm zones, according to supporters.

"The opportunity to be bold is there. You're going to take political arrows either way," said Shawn Cleave, government affairs director for the Oregon Association of Realtors.

Critics of the proposals say that affordable housing is needed more near cities where residents have access to jobs, transportation and other services, rather than in remote rural areas.

More people living in the countryside also means strains will increase on local road and water systems, opponents said.

Neither bill requires housing to be provided at affordable rates or to residents with low incomes, said Mary Kyle McCurdy, deputy director of the 1,000 Friends of Oregon, a nonprofit that supports Oregon's land use system.

The proposals don't prohibit landowners from using the dwellings for short-term vacation rentals, which often crowd out long-term rentals, McCurdy said.

Even if the bills contained such provisions, they'd be difficult to enforce given the rural locations of the dwellings, she said.

The profitability of short-term rentals has caused them to proliferate in Hood River County, where farming is already challenging because of the small size of farm parcels, said Mike McCarthy, an orchardist in the county.

Farm practices are often incompatible with residential uses and growers must comply with federal restrictions that prohibit spraying pesticides near dwellings, McCarthy said.

Washington lawmaker not on board with hiking beef checkoff

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — A proposal to double the Washington Beef Commission's budget has not won support from a House member who's been chewing on the subject for months.

The Senate already has passed a bill to increase the beef checkoff to \$2.50 from \$1.50. While 50 cents would still go to the national Cattlemen's Beef Board, the added dollar would go to the state commission. The increase would boost the commission's annual budget to about \$2 million from \$1 million.

The measure now goes to the House, where Rep. Tom Dent, R-Moses Lake, told colleagues last year he would meet with producers to talk over the idea.

Dent said Thursday he would "hard-pressed" to support a dollar increase. "That would double the budget," he said. "That's a lot."

The per head fee, paid by cattle sellers, has been the same since 2001.

The Washington Cattlemen's Association, Cattle Feeders of Washington and the Washington State Dairy Federation support the fee increase as a vital contribution to burnishing beef's image in an age of internet misinformation.

The Cattle Producers of Washington opposes the fee increase,



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington state Rep. Tom Dent, R-Moses Lake, says he doubts a proposal to double the Beef Commission's budget will pass the House.

arguing ranches don't get enough benefit or enough information about how their money is being spent.

Sen. Judy Warnick, also a Moses Lake Republican, joined Dent in meeting extensively over the past year with producers.

Warnick came down in favor of the fee increase, a decision that she acknowledged was not universally embraced by cattlemen. "It is a decision I did not take lightly," she said.

Dent said he might consider backing a phased-in increase,

though he said that would depend on the Senate passing his Beef Commission bill. The measure would leave the checkoff at \$1.50, while requiring the commission to present a "detailed and explanatory" budget.

"My bill has to get to the governor's desk, or I won't do anything," Dent said.

The bill has passed the House and will have a hearing Thursday by the Senate agriculture committee, which Warnick chairs.

The commission's executive director, Patti Brumbach, said she

would have no problem complying with Dent's bill.

"Anyway we can improve our communication, we welcome," she said.

Many cattlemen have come to Olympia to testify in support of raising the beef checkoff.

"We're very, very proud to come with a substantial coalition of other livestock groups that are in favor of this legislation," said Washington Cattlemen's Association President Tyler Cox, a Walla Walla rancher.

The Washington Farm Bureau also has gotten involved, sending an email alert asking its members to support Warnick's bill.

Cattle Producers of Washington President Scott Nielsen said in an interview that the ranchers he's spoken to overwhelming oppose the increase.

"I do not believe it would be supported by a majority of the people," he said. "They could put it to a vote. I believe it would fail."

Brumbach said a vote would be expensive and logistically difficult, and the final decision would still rest with the Legislature.

Missouri cattlemen last year voted down a proposal to raise that state's beef checkoff by \$1.

The Missouri Cattlemen's Association, Missouri Farm Bureau and two dairy groups supported hiking the fee. Some 6,565 producers voted, and 75 percent said "no."

Ag group aims to start Eastern Idaho virtual farmers' market

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

DRIGGS, Idaho — An organization that recently formed to create marketing opportunities for locally produced food plans to start a web-based virtual farmers' market, with the goal of serving a four-county area.

Participants in the Teton Food and Farm Coalition, which started on Dec. 16, 2016, meet monthly to discuss ways to link area food producers with distributors, restaurants, processors and others involved in the local food system.

Participants include University of Idaho, Teton Valley Farmers Market, the City of Driggs, large- and small-scale producers, High Country Resource Conservation & Development, and a pair of nonprofits devoted to local food — Full Circle Education and Slow Food in the Teton.

The coalition will apply for a roughly \$250,000 grant through USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service to expand direct sales of local food, hire a coordinator for their organization and fund development of the virtual farmers' market. The project would seek to develop both a print directory of producers and an online forum marketing goods from producers in Teton County, Idaho, and Teton County, Wyo., eventually expanding into Idaho's Fremont and Madison counties. Customers would pick up their produce and goods from central locations.

The grant will be submitted under the nonprofit umbrella of High Country RC&D, which provides technical assistance and support to projects that improve local sustainable economies and agriculture.



Courtesy of University of Idaho Extension

A hot air balloon flies over the Teton Valley Farmers' Market in Driggs, Idaho. Members of a new organization based in Driggs aim to create a virtual farmers' market serving four counties.

Slow Food would oversee the daily operations of the virtual farmers' market.

"Anything that can make the agricultural sector stronger is something High Country is very interested in," said High Country Executive Coordinator Pam Herdrich.

Herdrich explained awareness of local food opportunities came from a 2014 regional agricultural assessment her organization led, with funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The assessment found 20 percent of regional farms were larger than 500 acres, while 40 percent were less than

50 acres. Half of the producers surveyed estimated at least 76 percent of their products were consumed locally.

Wyatt Penfold, who has a large farm in Driggs, said his 16-year-old son Alex will attend the coalition's meetings on behalf of his farm and the Farm Bureau.

Penfold has sold barley directly to local microbreweries and envisions the virtual market could help move some of his quinoa. But he believes the virtual market will offer the greatest opportunities to small-scale producers.

"I'm going to stay involved in it because it's a great tool for the community to show as larger farm-

ers, we're still willing to help," Penfold said.

University of Idaho Teton County Extension educator Jennifer Werlin, who started her job last April, said she's specializing in community food systems largely based on the results of the agricultural assessment. Werlin believes the virtual farmers' market has the potential to serve more than 100 producers within a 100-mile radius of Driggs.

"We have quite a local food movement happening in the area," Werlin said. "We're looking at several different federal, state and local grant opportunities that will help build our local food economy."

Profit From Our Experience

Matching people, science, and technology to the needs of our growers

Wireworm test plot in St. John, Washington

Crop Production Services
www.CPSAGU.com

Crop Production Services is the nation's leading supplier of crop inputs and technologies including; Fertilizers, Crop Protection Products, Seed, Custom Application, Nutriscription HD Web Based Precision Ag technology, and an extremely versatile Agronomic Testing Program. Our sales staff has decades of experience to offer the best possible advice. Contact your local Crop Production Services Branch for details or visit our website at

Crop Production Services
www.CPSAGU.com

Almira (509) 639-2461 Athena (541) 566-3533 Baker City (541) 523-6705 Clyde (509) 749-2222 Connell (509) 234-3441 Coulee City (509) 632-5697

Davenport (509) 725-3241 Endicott (509) 657-3452 George (509) 785-3263 Glade (Pasco) (509) 547-9771 Harrington (509) 253-4311

Hermiston (541) 567-2510 LaGrande (541) 963-3735 Mansfield (509) 683-1022 Moses Lake (509) 766-7772 North Powder (541) 898-2357

Okanogan (509) 826-1815 Othello (509) 488-5227 Pendleton (541) 276-1070 or (503) 393-1141 Plymouth (509) 783-4076 Pomeroy (509) 843-3491

Reardan (509) 796-2655 Rosalia (509) 523-6811 St. John (509) 648-3377 Toppenish (509) 865-2045 Walla Walla (509) 525-4920 Waterville (509) 745-8857