

Oregon family foresters seek secondary dwellings

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Small forestland owners want the Oregon Board of Forestry to endorse a proposal to allow new dwellings on forestland for relatives of aging operators.

Half the owners of Oregon's family forests are 65 years or older, but unlike the aging population of the state's farmers, they can't build secondary homes on their property, said Bonnie Shumaker, a Washington County landowner.

"The upcoming issue of inter-generational change is huge," she said during a July 24 board meeting in Salem, Ore.

Shumaker serves on the Committee for Family Forest-

lands that makes recommendations to the Oregon Board of Forestry, which oversees forest management policies and regulations.

The committee hopes to win the board's support for a "legislative concept" in 2019 that would allow secondary dwellings to be built on the same parcel of forest resource land.

Oregon's statewide land use law has successfully retained 98 percent of the state's forests since being enacted 45 years ago but family forestland operators face difficulty maintaining their properties as they age, Shumaker said.

Allowing relatives to inhabit a secondary dwelling would provide forest operators with needed assistance, she said. Meanwhile, younger family



EO Media Group File

Oregon small forest owners say they need the ability to build houses on their property for relatives who help manage the operation.

members could learn about managing the property while still pursuing a career.

"Not having an option to live on the land remains an ob-

stacle," Shumaker said.

While the development of forests along the "wildland-urban interface" is a concern, the legislative proposal would ad-

dress the issue by only allowing secondary dwellings on the same parcel, without subdividing the land.

The secondary dwelling would have to pass "fire safe" regulations and only be allowed on property that already qualifies for a dwelling.

There's also discussion of establishing a minimum lot size that would be eligible for secondary dwellings, most likely 80 to 160 acres, Shumaker said.

"I'm a proponent of land use. We need land use but we need it to be common sense," she said.

Farmers have long been allowed to have secondary dwellings under Oregon land use law, likely due to their day-to-day involvement in agriculture, she said.

It's possible family foresters didn't push hard enough to overcome the perception that forest work is more sporadic, Shumaker said.

Having help with harvest, planting and fire suppression would actually ensure a smoother succession in areas that are prone to development, said Evan Barnes, the committee's acting chair and a Douglas County landowner.

"It's not meant as a development tool," he said.

Peter Daugherty, the Oregon state forester, encouraged the committee to approach the board for an endorsement again after refining the proposal.

"It is consistent with the goals of the Board of Forestry," he said.

Red Walla Walla sweet onions 10 years in the making

Farmer retains flavor while adding color

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — It took 10 years for Michael J. Locati to develop a red Walla Walla sweet onion.

While harvesting, Locati and his uncle noticed that certain onions would have very light pink hues.

They started pulling those onions and planting the seed over and over to get redder onions.

This year, Locati planted about 10 acres of the red Walla Walla sweet onions.

"It's still in the development process," he said. "It's always going to be that way."

Locati considers the red onions a "rosé" sweet.

"It's not a deep, dark red," he said. "We hope to get there, but we don't want to sacrifice our flavor profile to just have color."



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Michael J. Locati looks through red Walla Walla sweet onions at the Walla Walla River Packing Co. on July 25.

Walla Walla sweet onions are a niche onion, protected by a federal marketing order designating the legal production area. Only 10 to 15 farmers raise them on 500 total acres in Walla Walla County in Washington and a small part of northeastern Oregon.

Due to their high water content and low sulfur and low pyruvic acid, half that

of ordinary yellow storage onions, Walla Walla sweets are considered sweeter — despite containing negligible amounts of sugar — and have less "bite" or tendency to cause tears during chopping.

"In ways, we're selling a red, but in ways, we're not," Locati said. "We're selling a Walla Walla sweet still."

People may already have

an idea about red onions, he said. Once they get over their initial "fear factor," the response from customers has been positive.

The rosé onion causes a "nice, sweet water explosion in your mouth," followed by a mild onion flavor, Locati said.

"It's really, really, really sweet compared to a regular red onion," he said. "You wouldn't bite into a red onion the way you can these."

Red Walla Walla sweets are commercially available at Metropolitan Market in the Seattle area, at Walla Walla River Packing and Storage and through the Locati Farms website.

The reds haven't gone through big retail channels yet because of the low volume, Locati said.

Locati is chairman of the Walla Walla Sweet Onion Marketing Committee. He said the red Walla Walla sweets will likely remain exclusive to his family's company.

"Any time you can offer

a different product, it's good for the market," he said. "It's just something new, fresh and different from the traditional yellow."

Locati will keep working to perfect the variety's color while keeping the classic Walla Walla sweet onion lineage.

Asked if other new Walla Walla sweets are in the works, Locati said he's "always working on something," but anything must be developed through traditional plant breeding and natural selection, all derived from the original Walla Walla sweet onion brought to the United States from Corsica, off the coast of Italy.

Locati said he enjoys the surprise element that's part of plant science.

"You work so hard, you don't know, you don't know, you still don't know and then, all of a sudden, you get lucky or whatever happens and here you are," he said. "It was an experiment that went right, I guess. I hope it went right."



Dan Wheat/Capital Press File

Yolanda Penaloza loads trays with Red Delicious apples at Valicoff Fruit Co., near Wapato, Wash., in 2016.

Washington Apple Commission signs import deal with Indonesia

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — The Washington Apple Commission has signed an agreement on Indonesian imports that may lead to improved trade relations.

The commission agreed to support imports through promotional activities to help expand sales, and the Indonesian Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Exporter and Importer Association confirmed its desire to import a range of varieties and sizes of Washington apples throughout the year.

The agreement, effective for three years, was signed July 24 in Washington, D.C.

Mark Powers, president of the Northwest Horticultural Council in Yakima, said the agreement was an outcome of Indonesian and U.S. trade talks last week in Washington, D.C. He said the talks involve other commodities but that the apple portion could result in Indonesia complying with a December 2016 World Trade Organization ruling against Indonesia's trade restrictions on U.S. apples. If that happens, a current several-month Indonesian ban on U.S. apples could end, he said.

Indonesia has become more restrictive in recent years and has gone from three- to four-month bans to closures approaching six months, he said.

Washington sold 1.1 million, 40-pound boxes of apples to Indonesian customers this year from the 2017 crop, down from 1.5 million boxes from the 2016 crop. That's been the typical range since 2012. In 1996 it was 4 million. Exports could easily be 2.5 million to 3 million boxes without restrictions, Apple Commission President Todd Fryhover has said.

"There is a long-standing history between these markets. The agreement to continue this relationship is an act of cooperation and it was an effort by both parties to establish a strong future of trade," said Rebecca Lyons, the commission's international marketing director, in Wenatchee.

Washington produces more than 90 percent of U.S. apple exports and the commission promotes Washington apples in overseas markets.

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