

Oregon's Douglas County withdraws rural housing zone

Change would have opened 22,500 acres to rural home sites

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Oregon's Douglas County has withdrawn its plan to allow more rural housing on 22,500 acres of farm and forest land, though it's likely to be revived.

Earlier this year, the county decided to allow 20-acre home sites on properties deemed of marginal value for agriculture or forestry within two miles of certain cities and communities.

The change was challenged before Oregon's Land Use Board of Appeals by two state agencies — the Department of

Land Conservation and Development and the Department of Fish and Wildlife — as well as the 1,000 Friends of Oregon conservation group.

Douglas County has now notified LUBA that it's withdrawing the amendment to its comprehensive land use plan for reconsideration.

Joshua Shaklee, the county planning manager, said there were some "potential procedural defects" in adopting the change that may have convinced LUBA to remand it.

The county expects to "take

another crack at it" after resolving any possible issues, which are now being reviewed by a law firm, but it's unclear how long the process will take, he said.

"I'd describe it as a setback but not anything definitive," Shaklee said.

Meriel Darzen, staff attorney for 1,000 Friends of Oregon, said the organization is hopeful the county will accept more citizen involvement in formulating a plan.

The final version of the plan was adopted after the op-

portunity for public comments had ended, which caused concerns about residents being able to weigh in on the change, she said.

"We're hoping the withdrawal recognizes there needs to be more public process with this decision," Darzen said.

The county has 90 days to resubmit the decision or otherwise report to LUBA, she said. If it decides to restart the decision-making process altogether, the eventual plan can still be appealed to LUBA.

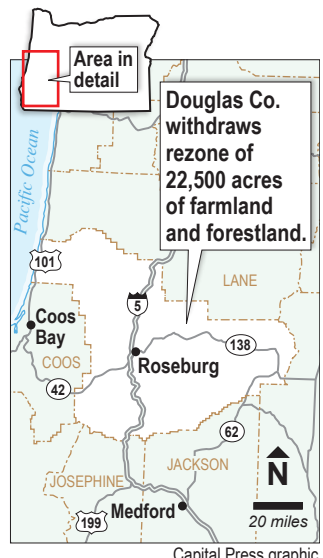
According to the county, only about 25 percent of the acreage available for new homes sites under the plan

would have actually been developed, resulting in about 375 housing parcels.

The acreage was scaled down from 35,000 acres in the original proposal, which represented about 1 percent of the county's farm and forest land.

However, critics said the county set too high a standard for commercially productive land, effectively opening the way for development of property that could profitably be used for grazing and logging.

The plan was also criticized for potentially complicating the expansion of "urban grown boundaries" around communities.



Washington county tallying elk damage to its farmland

Losses could top \$1 million a year

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

An elk herd encouraged to grow by Washington wildlife managers is inflicting significant damage to commercial agriculture in eastern Skagit County, according to the county assessor's office.

Farmers, responding to a survey, report damages ranging from a couple hundred dollars to more than \$100,000. The survey is only half done and includes assumptions that could influence the numbers. When it's done, estimated losses to income-producing farmland could total roughly \$1.4 million annually, Assessor Dave Thomas said Tuesday.

"It's truly an estimate," he said. "Our concern is the continuing viability of ag use in that part of the county."

The North Cascades elk herd, also known as the Nooksack elk herd, has been revived in the past 15 years by the Department of Fish and Wildlife and nine Native American tribes. Hunting was curtailed and elk were transported from around Mount St. Helens. As the population approximately doubled in a decade, elk have moved down from the hills to valley farmland.

Farmers and ranchers say the elk have become so comfortable in their fields that hazing them back into the hills or getting a permit from the state to shoot one provides only temporary relief.



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Elk graze in a valley in eastern Skagit County, Wash. The county assessor's office is tallying the damage elk do to farmland in the area.

So far, 48 of 57 farmers in eastern Skagit County who have responded to the survey report elk damage.

Thirty-six estimated losses totaling \$532,122. Twelve farmers reported damage, but did not provide an estimate.

Chief Deputy Assessor Annette DeVoe told county commissioners Aug. 7 that some east county landowners like elk, but full-time farmers have been hit particularly hard.

"For big farmers, they (the elk) are eating crops and causing significant damage," she said. "It's been interesting and eye-opening as far as how it's affecting the actual market value of properties."

Farmers can apply for compensation for elk damage by submitting tax, prop-

erty and insurance records, an adjuster's report and a list of measures they took to try to prevent the damage.

The department received two claims last year for elk damage in the Skagit Valley. One farmer didn't qualify, and one didn't complete the paperwork. Fish and Wildlife Regional Director Amy Windrope said the department is willing to discuss revising the compensation system with farmers. "If they're identifying barriers, let's fix them," she said.

To get elk off farmland, the department has increased hunting, issued kill permits and installed fences. "I don't disagree with the analysis that more needs to happen," Windrope said. "I really feel like we're taking the steps that are going to give us a long-term solution." Swinomish tribe hunting and gathering program manager Tino Villaluz said elk damage is a problem.

"We have some serious issues we have to deal with," he said. "It's not falling on deaf ears."

Randy Good, vice president of the Skagit County Cattlemen's Association, said the number of elk on his land is growing, and some

are limping with hoof rot, another concern for cattlemen.

Good said the department should allow hunting year-round on land where the owner gives permission. The assessor's survey should draw attention to the economic costs of not doing it, he said.

"Putting that information out there puts a new twist on it," he said.

Thomas, the county assessor, sent a letter this month to Fish and Wildlife Director Kelly Susewind reporting that several landowners who responded to the survey said they stopped farming, ranching or leasing land because of elk damage.

In one case, landowners twice tried to start a Christmas tree farm, but elk ate the young trees, according to the assessor's office. The 35 acres were redesignated from farmland to conservation land.

The Skagit elk came up briefly at the Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting Aug. 10 in Olympia. Commissioner Larry Carpenter, a Skagit County resident, said he's heard a lot about the elk. "I think the situation is out of hand," he said.



Brad Carlson/Capital Press

Corn in southeast Meridian, Idaho, Aug. 13. Local growing conditions for corn have been mostly favorable this year.

Most of Idaho's 2018 corn crop fares well

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Mike Goodson's corn crop looks good overall, and better than it could have.

"For all the heat we had, I'm actually kind of surprised," the Parma, Idaho, farmer said. "I haven't seen as much stress as I thought I would see in it. We must have had cool-enough nights to let it pollinate, so overall it looks good."

Most Idaho cornfields look good headed into harvest thanks to ample supplies of irrigation water and mostly good weather. Results for the wind-pollinated crop have varied by type and location.

Corn is important in Idaho because its total acreage can approach or even exceed that of potatoes in a given year, and because it is part of southwest Idaho's major seed industry.

"This year, we had a little problem in the spring with dryness but we did not have early heat in June," Goodson said. Early June's moderate temperatures helped get the crop up and going, he said.

Forty miles to the southeast, Melba, Idaho, farmer Brent Zeyer sees "great-looking" field corn and more slowly progressing sweet corn seed.

In his sweet corn seed fields, "it seems to me the heat or wind or pollination did not quite set up right, so the ears are not full," he said. Kernels aren't setting on cobs as well as he would like, possibly due to recently tougher pollinating conditions and high heat.

"Some varieties I have seen are OK, but most I have seen are having a hard time," Zey-

er said, referring to sweet corn seed.

He has seen some insect damage in sweet corn seed fields around the Boise area, and some growers are spraying fields to get the insect count down, he said. He sprayed early in the growing season, "and hopefully it lasts long enough." As for his field corn, "ears are filled clear to the ends" and no insect pressure was apparent as of Aug. 13, Zeyer said. Corn ears are filling out better than they did last year.

Irrigation water supplies have been good, and most corn was planted in time to avoid stress from the pronounced heat of midsummer, he said.

"With the warm weather, and the moisture we're able to put on this corn, I think all field corn looks pretty good from what I've seen around the Melba area," Zeyer said.

"For the most part, field corn is tall, looks good and survived the heat OK," he said. He plans to start harvest in early to mid-September, roughly the same schedule as 2017.

Zeyer believes southwest Idaho this spring saw fewer acres of field corn planted because prices for grain corn at the time were fairly low — prompting more farmers to instead plant wheat or another crop requiring less water, fertilizer and labor.

Goodson said last year's season — following a heavy winter — got off to a later start and featured a hot June, "which kind of just put it back a little further."

"We basically had to have a frost to bring the moisture down (out of the plant) to a harvestable level," he said. That frost came around early October 2017.

LEGAL

Applications sought for the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) Board of Directors.

Pursuant to OAR 629-065-0400, the purpose of this notice is to solicit applications for the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) Board of Directors. Applicants meeting all the qualifications will be maintained on a list to be used by the State Forester for filling existing vacancies and to fill vacancies caused by expiration of an existing member's term. Each applicant must certify in the application that he/she meets the qualifications for the position.

Each "producer" applicant for the board of directors shall have the following qualifications: 1) be a citizen of the United States; 2) be a bona fide resident of this state; 3) be a "producer" in this state, an employee of such a producer or own between 100 and 2,000 acres of forestland in this state on which harvest taxes are paid, but have no direct financial interest in any forest products processing activity; 4) have been actively engaged in producing forest products for a period of at least five years; 5) derive a substantial portion of income from the production of forest products ("substantial portion of income" means that 50 percent or more of the gross income of a member of the board of directors is derived from timber or timber products ownership or affiliation); 6) have demonstrated, through membership in producers' organizations or organizations representing landowners who meet the requirements of ORS 526.610(4), a profound interest in the development of Oregon's forest products industry; 7) is available to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of the OFRI Board of Directors; and 8) meets the producer class eligibility requirements for the position to which nominated. Each "employee" applicant shall be: 1) a citizen of the United States; 2) a bona fide resident of this state; and 3) an hourly wage employee of a producer or a person who represents such employees.

The "producer" class eligibility requirements are:

Class 1 Producers having paid forest products harvest tax on 20 million board feet or less per year in the most recent year preceding the appointment.

Class 2 Producers having paid forest products harvest tax on more than 20 million board feet but less than 100 million board feet per year in the most recent year preceding the appointment.

Class 3 Producers having paid forest products harvest tax on 100 million board feet or more per year in the most recent year preceding the appointment.

Small Woodland Owner An owner of between 100 and 2,000 acres of forestland in this state on which harvest taxes were paid in at least one of the five years preceding the appointment, and who has no direct financial interest in any forest products processing activity.

Persons wanting to apply for the OFRI Board of Directors must request application materials from Kathy Storm at OFRI, storm@ofri.org or 971-673-2953. Send completed application packets to the State Forester: Oregon Forestry Department, Attention Whitney Lanham, 2600 State Street, Bldg. B, Salem, Oregon 97310, or via email at Whitney.Lanham@oregon.gov. Applications must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on September 14, 2018.

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