

GOAL 3: AGRICULTURAL LANDS BACKGROUND REPORT

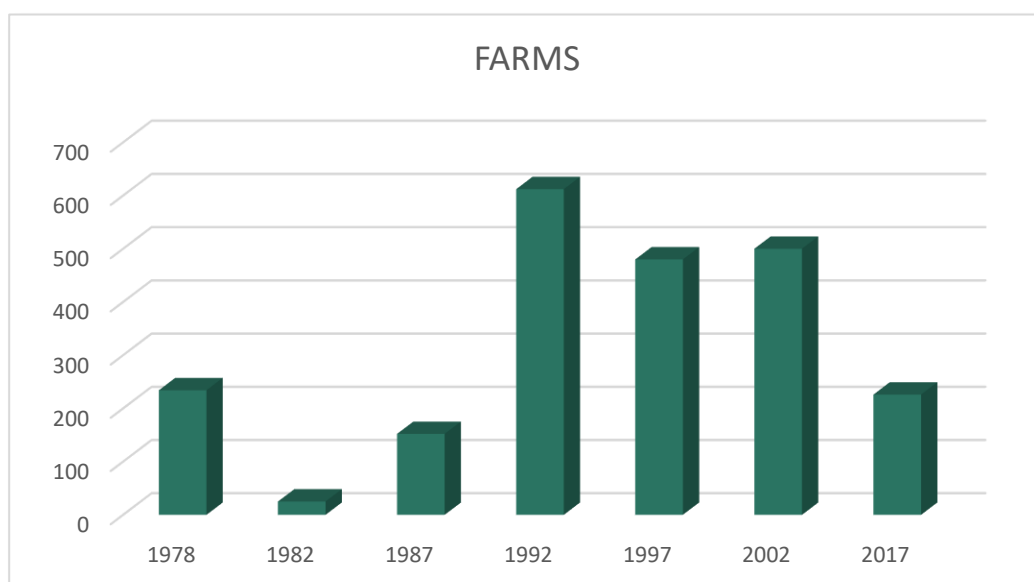
PURPOSE: To preserve and maintain agricultural lands.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

When the Clatsop County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1980, there was a general downward decline in farming activities. The plan at that time, dismissed “small farm sizes” that were “interspersed with rural tracts, difficult terrain, a wet climate, and competition from other land uses” as being unconducive to farming activities, as such parcels could not be consolidated into “large, efficient farm units which are characteristic of other areas of the state where agriculture is thriving.”

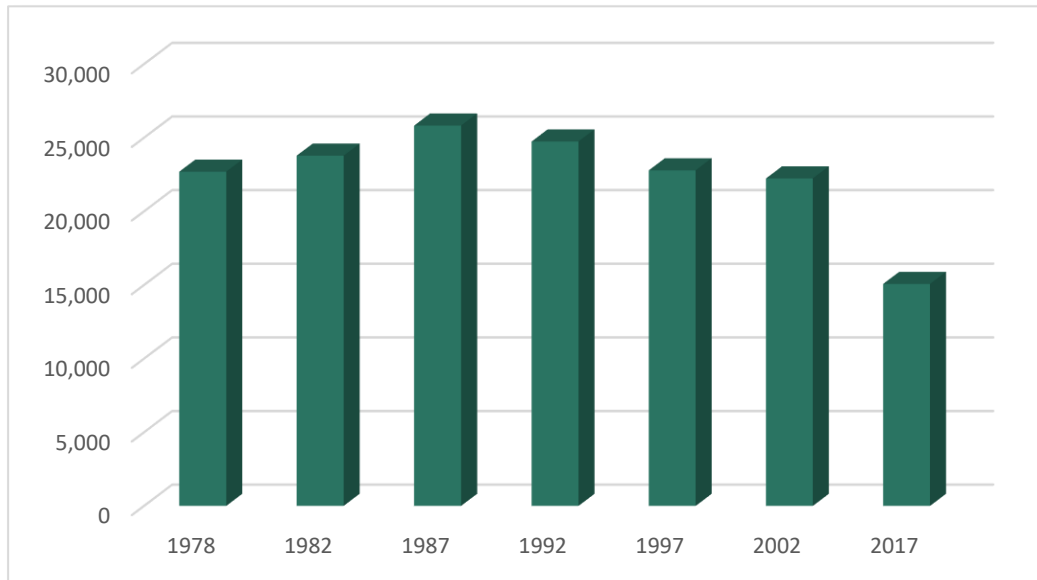
That view is outdated following a surge in the farm-to-table movement and the emergence of artisanal, local and small-batch culinary supporters. As shown on Figures 1 and 2, while the total number of farms in Clatsop County has remained relatively stable between 1978 and 2017 (down from 234 to 226), the total overall acreage of farmland has declined from 22,691 acres in 1978 to 15,070 acres in 2017. Additionally, as shown in Figure 3, the average market value of farmland has tripled since 1978. With an increasing population, rising land values and a shortage of affordable housing units, the pressure to convert farmland to non-farm uses has been steadily increasing.

FIGURE 1



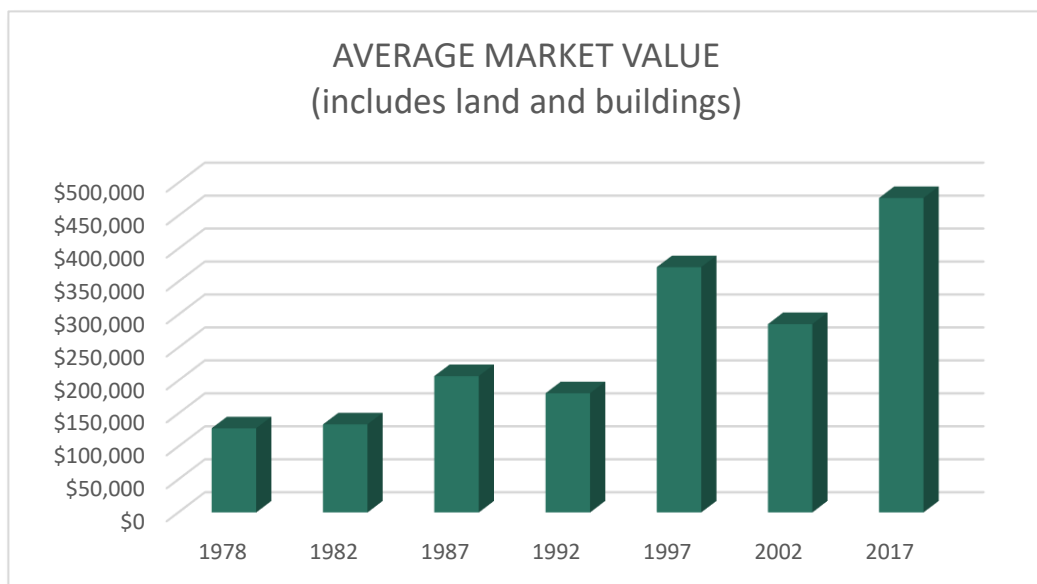
Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). National Agricultural Statistics Service

FIGURE 2



Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). National Agricultural Statistics Service

FIGURE 3



Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). National Agricultural Statistics Service

CURRENT CONDITIONS

In November 2020, the Department of Land Conservation and Development released its *2018-2019 Oregon Farm and Forest Land Use Report*, which details how much farmland was converted to non-farm uses during that period. Clatsop County approved one non-farm dwelling and one replacement dwelling on farmland. No primary farm dwelling approvals were



Clatsop County Fairgrounds

granted by the County. The County also approved two agritourism uses and one private park/campground on land zoned EFU. Since 1994, Clatsop County has approved 75 total dwellings on farmland. Since 1978, farmland in Clatsop County decreased from 22,691 acres to 15,070 acres—a loss of 7,621 acres.

In 1978 the average farm size in Clatsop County was 97 acres, an average decrease of 25 acres from

the 1974 average size of 122 acres. The 2017

Census of Agriculture, conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) breaks down the number of farms by size in Clatsop County:

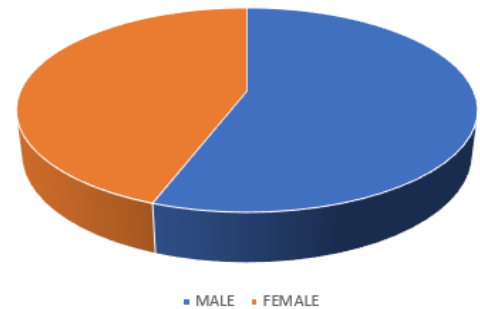
- 1-9 acres: 74
- 10-49 acres: 76
- 50-179 acres: 60
- 180-499 acres: 9
- 500-999 acres: 6
- 1,000 acres or more: 1

This data confirms the continuing decrease in average farm size in Clatsop County, with 66% of farms now being less than 50 acres in size.

The NASS data also reveals that the demographics of farming have changed over the years. As shown in Figures 4 and 5, 44% of farmers in Clatsop County self-identified as female versus 11.5% in 1978. The average age of a farmer in Clatsop County is 59.29 years compared to 51.2 years in 1978. NASS data also shows that 31% of farms self-identify as new and beginning farms and almost all are family farms.

FIGURE 4

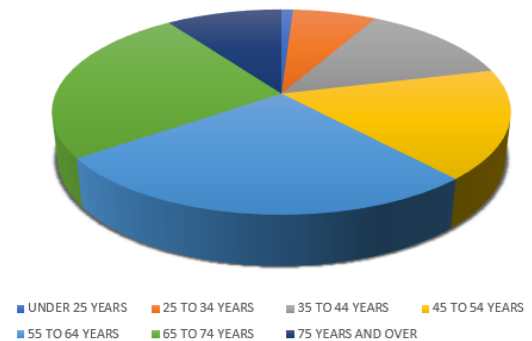
REPORTED GENDER



Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). National Agricultural Statistics Service

FIGURE 5

AGE GROUPS



Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). National Agricultural Statistics Service

FUTURE CONDITIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE AND IMPACTS TO AGRICULTURAL LANDS

As discussed in Goal 2, the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute is projecting an increase in the following climate events over the next 30 years:

- More summer droughts
- More frequent and longer forest fires
- Greater vulnerability to insects and disease
- Water resource conflicts
- Increased flooding



DLCD Goal 3 Workshop – September 2019

A significant amount of grazing land is located within floodplains and was created through the construction of a system of dikes, levees and tidegates, some of which are now approaching 100 years in age. Some of the diking districts are no longer in operation and maintenance and repair of dikes may not be occurring on a regular basis. These areas of the County may become more vulnerable to flood events and to sea level rise, which may raise the overall height of adjacent rivers and streams.



Changes in climate have the potential to substantially impact agricultural activities within the County. To assist in mitigating possible negative impacts the County should emphasize the importance of locally-produced food and encourage sustainable farming best practices. As periods of drought increase in frequency and duration, the role of water rights and water quantity will become more prominent.

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Additionally, changes to climate increase the presence of invasive weed species, diseases and pests, all of which can affect agricultural practices within Clatsop County.

AGRICULTURE AND THE CONTINUED DEMAND FOR HOUSING

In 2019, Clatsop County, in partnership with the five municipalities, completed a countywide housing study. The study determined that there is adequate buildable land within unincorporated Clatsop County and that there are sufficient dwellings available to meet the County's current and projected population growth. The study also determined that there is a lack of housing at certain price points, which is creating development pressures and prohibiting residents from being able to find affordable housing. Adding to this situation, as stated in the housing study, is the high number of dwellings that are either used as second homes or offered as short-term rental units, which further decreases the supply of available permanent housing.

Demand for increased residential development is likely to intensify as in-migration accelerates as people relocate from areas outside the county that are becoming less livable and sustainable. As other areas of Oregon and the western United States endure increased heat, drought and wildfires, so-called "climate change refugees" may seek to relocate to this area which will still remain relatively livable, despite its own changes to climate. The continued pressure to convert agricultural resource lands as opposed to increasing density on urban lands, reduce parcel sizes within established rural communities, and/or allow accessory dwelling units in rural residential zones results in additional infrastructure costs to the county and locates lower-income populations farther away from services such as childcare, medical, social services, food, and community centers and increases their transportation costs. Additionally, if agricultural land is transitioned to housing, this may reduce the county's overall self-reliance and resiliency. Ideally, increased residential development should primarily occur within incorporated city boundaries, where urban-level infrastructure is already provided. Increased density within urban growth boundaries and incorporated city boundaries is consistent with Statewide Planning Goals 11 (Public Facilities and Services) and 14 (Urbanization). New high-density residential development adjacent to existing farms and agricultural facilities generates the potential for conflicts between new residents and established agricultural practices.

AGRICULTURE AND WILDLIFE

Beginning in 2019, Clatsop County participated with the cities of Warrenton, Gearhart and Seaside, in a Solutions Oregon project designed to reduce the number and severity of interactions between elk and humans in the Clatsop Plains planning area. While the purpose of this project was primarily to address interactions in areas that were more densely developed, there remains a potential for increased conflict between wildlife and areas of agricultural development. Because there is only a limited supply of land within the county, accelerated residential and non-residential development within rural areas will force wildlife behaviors and migratory patterns to change. As seen in the Clatsop Plains planning area, as natural habitat is

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replaced with manicured landscapes and gardens, wildlife will adapt and replace their natural foraging areas with these human-created landscapes. The county's original comprehensive plan cited the impacts from elk on agricultural crops and included recommendations that the State Wildlife Commission be officially requested to resolve the existing adverse impacts on agricultural lands associated with elk, including, but not limited to, one or more of the following measures:

- revision of hunting laws to sustain management levels;
- reduce the elk population in Clatsop County;
- indemnify the owners for damage on their property resulting from elk; and
- pay for and install adequate fencing.

The original plan also called for any requests to change zoning to assess the need to establish additional wildlife refuges and game management areas adjacent to agricultural lands.

The potential impacts of climate change, along with increased demand for residential units, will continue to result in habitat loss for elk and other big game within the county. Educational campaigns or informational brochures that provide for a range of appropriate landscaping and fencing materials from which property owners can choose should be considered in order to minimize damage from game whose interactions with agricultural lands, both larger for-profit facilities and small family gardens and farms, may become more commonplace over the next 20 years.

CANNABIS AND INDUSTRIAL HEMP

[Ballot Measure 91](#), approved by Oregon voters in 2014, legalized the recreational use of marijuana. The 2018 Federal Farm Bill decriminalized the cultivation of industrial hemp. Both cannabis and hemp are considered farm crops in Clatsop County and are thus permitted to be grown anywhere where farm uses are permitted. In 2018, Clatsop County adopted Ordinance 18-05, which established time, place and manner regulations associated with the production, processing, sale and testing of cannabis.

PSILOCYBIN

Ballot Measure 109, approved by Oregon voters in 2020, directed the Oregon Health Authority to license and regulate the manufacturing, transportation, delivery, sale, and purchase of psilocybin products and the provision of psilocybin services to individuals 21 years of age or older. Under Ballot Measure 109, "manufacturing" includes the planting, cultivation, growing and harvesting of psilocybin. Psilocybin-producing fungi is recognized as a crop for the purpose of a farm use, a farm and farming practice. Therefore, it is permitted outright on Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) land. On August 10, 2022, the Board of Clatsop County Commissioners approved Ordinance 22-07 declaring a temporary ban on psilocybin businesses. The ordinance referred the ban to the electorate, who in November 2022 approved a two-year temporary ban on psilocybin product manufacturing and psilocybin service centers.