

## **AGRICULTURAL LANDS<sup>1</sup>**

### **GOAL: TO PRESERVE AND MAINTAIN AGRICULTURAL LAND**

#### **INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:**

Jackson County was established in 1852, the same year gold was discovered near Jacksonville. The Oregon and California Railroad was built through the county in about 1883, bringing along with it commercial and agricultural development. Aside from gold mining and commercial activities that supported mining, most commerce in the early days was associated with the railroad. The railroad also encouraged the development of the lumber industry. Agriculture began in the county on Homesteading Donation Land Claims, and consisted of general farming, ranching, and some fruit orchards. Most of the farm products were for local consumption. It was not until 1900 that the railroad and other land promoters engaged in large scale development of pears, apples, and other orchard fruits. About 12,000 acres of orchards, consisting mostly of pears, survived the economic difficulties of the 1920s and 1930s, and it was this pear industry which emerged from World War II as the county's leading agricultural activity. During the years immediately after World War II, agriculture was the most important sector of the economy.

Since that time the forest products industry, tourism, medical services, retail and other supporting activities have increased in economic importance in Jackson County. However, agriculture continues to be a significant economic and employment base in the county. And agriculture does not react as severely to natural economic trends as the forest products industry.

The Rogue Valley is distant from major markets and consequently has a competitive disadvantage compared to agricultural areas located closer to markets. Dependence on irrigation and the variable quality of soils increase economic risks inherent in agricultural enterprises compared to the risks in farming areas with milder and wetter climates.

This points to the need to decrease pressure on farm land values and to reduce conflicts that increase the costs of farming. Pressure on farm land values can be reduced by retaining large ownerships that can withstand economic difficulties more easily than smaller operations. Conflicts with accepted farming practices can be reduced by retaining agricultural lands in large blocks and by limiting intrusions of nonfarm uses in agricultural areas.

Rural living has been an important part of the history of Jackson County. Since World War II there has been an increasing demand for country homes in Jackson County. By 1950, 40 percent of the rural population of the county was nonfarm, and of the farm population, nearly 40 percent sought off-farm employment for the full year. The county experienced dramatic population growth between 1940 and 1950 (+61%), and from 25 to 40 percent growth per decade until the eighties. From 1980 to 1990 the percentage of growth slowed to 10.5%, but the actual numbers of new families coming into the county continue to have a significant effect on pressures to develop rural lands for residential use. This increase in population in rural areas has created or increased conflicts between rural living and agriculture.

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<sup>1</sup>Adopted by Ordinance 94-56, effective 9-18-94 (File 93-12-OA); amended by Ordinance 2001-27, effective 2-10-02 (File 2001-4-OA); amended by Ordinance 2014-9, effective 2-1-15 (File LRP2013-00004)

With the decline in full-time agriculture, there has been an increase in part-time agriculture. The significance of part-time farming was recognized in a 1958 Bureau of Reclamation report regarding the Talent Irrigation Project. That report addressed the repayment of bonded indebtedness by water users within the irrigation district. "Income earned from off-farm employment will remain a very important part of the repayment ability. Approximately two-thirds of the water users will need some income other than from the farm." This continues to hold true in Jackson County.

Economic Importance of Agriculture: Agriculture is a significant part of the county's economy. According to the "1990 Jackson County Estimated Gross Value of Agricultural Production", the estimated value of gross sales of farm products in Jackson County in 1990 was \$71,195,000, a 40% increase over gross sales in 1979 of \$51,022,818. The Agricultural Economics Department of Oregon State University has calculated that for each dollar of agricultural sales, a \$2.50-\$2.75 total effect is felt on a county's economy. Using the 2.50 multiplier effect, we can estimate that the total economic impact of 1990 Jackson County agricultural sales was approximately \$177,987,500. This estimated total economic impact represents money spent on products and services directly related to agriculture and money spent by agricultural wage earners in other sectors of the economy.

In spite of an estimated 40% increase in farm sales in just over a decade, growth in agricultural income has fallen behind the growth of total income in Jackson County. According to calculations using personal income data from the U.S. Census Regional Economic Information system, the importance of agricultural income and wages in the total Jackson County economy has decreased by half from 1971 to 1990.

The decade from 1980 to 1990 had a cumulative inflation rate of 25.7%, as calculated from annual rates listed in the Consumer Price Index. That means that a minimum 25.7% increase in gross agricultural sales was necessary just to keep up with inflation. Profitability has also been affected by changing prices. While the index of prices paid by farmers increased by 5.6% in the year 1989-90, the index of prices paid to farmers decreased 2.7%.

Predominant Farm Uses in Jackson County: Full-time agricultural production and employment are limited in the county. The major farm crops and farm uses are described below and compared in Table II. Hobby farming and small scale agriculture provide opportunities for agricultural diversity and are particularly appropriate for specialty crops and specialty or exotic livestock.

The median size range for farms that annually gross more than \$10,000 dollars is from 100 to 139 acres, and the median gross sales income is \$25,000 to \$40,000. These farms include about 48 per cent of the land in farms in Jackson County (Tables 2 and 16, 1987 Census of Agriculture), leaving about 52% of land in farms either in small scale agriculture or unmanaged. Farms with gross incomes less than \$10,000 only account for 8 percent of the county's gross annual farm receipts. These figures strongly support the need to preserve farm land in large blocks in order to preserve and maintain those farms that contribute in a substantial way to the area's existing agricultural economy. However, in areas where parcelization and/or residential development has already occurred, small scale agriculture is often the only way to keep land in productive farm use. Encouraging a variety of types of agriculture in the county provides a greater possibility of innovation and resiliency in the agricultural economy.

Important Aspects of Agriculture in Jackson County:

- 1) Orchard Crops: Pears are the most important single farm crop in Jackson County. Gross farm income from pears in 1990 was \$38,353,000, over half of total farm income. Overall, orchard crops produced \$40,682,000, providing 56% more gross income in 1990 than the \$25,999,418 reported in 1979. Future economic stability and health of the orchard industry depends on the cost and availability of energy for frost protection and transportation and water for irrigation and frost protection.

A significant number of established orchards are old and their productivity is declining. Some of these older and declining orchards are found on clay soils which are predominantly Class III and IV. Orchardists are removing older, unproductive orchard stock and replanting the same lands at a higher density. Cover crops are being planted in orchards to make it possible to use tractors and spray equipment in the orchards, even when the soil is wet.

- 2) Vegetables, Seed, Specialty and Nursery Crops: In 1990 vegetable and nursery crops, such as sweet corn, tomatoes, onions, berries, and greenhouse products were grown principally on 350 acres and generated an estimated \$2,271,000 dollars in gross farm income. While the acreage committed to such crops is small, the income yield per acre is the highest of any crop category; an estimated \$6,488 per acre in 1990. Seed and specialty crops were produced on an additional 520 acres, with a gross value of \$836,000.
- 3) Forage Crops: Forage crops are produced throughout the county on farms which have one or more of the following features: irrigated bottom or valley terrace land, gently sloped hillsides with suitable soils in terms of drainage, depth and fertility, and mountain meadow or plateau land with irrigation. Most forage crop production occurs in conjunction with other farm uses such as livestock, seed crops or dairy. The estimated gross value of forage crops was \$4,591,000 in 1990, up 15% from the estimated amount of \$3,980,000 in 1979. In that same time period the estimated total acreage committed to forage crops was reduced by 8.5%, from 26,900 acres in 1979 to 24,600 acres in 1990.
- 4) Cereal Crops: Cereal crops, such as wheat, barley and oats, are produced on Class I through IV soils. Gross value of cereal crops decreased by 26% from 1979 to 1990, from \$866,000 to \$649,000. The potential for future expansion of cereal crop production may be limited because of a lack of water and affordable large parcels of land.
- 5) Dairy Industry: Although production by the dairy industry increased about 25 percent between 1978 and 1979, in the last decade the gross value of dairy products has declined by approximately 40%. In 1979 the estimated gross value was \$4,910,000; in 1990 it was only \$2,938,000. Available data indicates 16 registered dairies in the county in 1992. Among the reasons for the decline are health and sanitary regulations that have increased the necessary investment for facilities and the need for potable water to the point that part-time and small dairy operations are not viable. Only high producing dairies with adequate facilities can continue to operate profitably. Prior to 1986 production quotas were set by a State Marketing Order. Currently there are no legislated restrictions on production. However, a Federal Marketing Order establishes prices (based on prices received in Minnesota and Wisconsin) for each of the following use classifications:

Class 1 - fluid milk (highest classification)  
 Class 2 - soft yogurt, cottage cheese, etc.  
 Class 3 - butter, powdered milk, cheese  
 The majority of dairies in Oregon produce for Class 3.

**TABLE I**  
 FARM CROPS AND USES IN JACKSON COUNTY 1979

USE	ACRES*	FARM SALES**	PREDOMINANT FARM LOCATION
Tree Fruit & Nuts	10,808	\$25,999,418	Bear Creek Valley & middle Rogue Valley
Truck & Specialty Crops	950	499,400	Class I & II soil areas in Bear Creek and Applegate Valleys
Forage Crops	26,900	3,980,000	Applegate & Bear Creek Valleys, Sams Valley, Eagle Point area
Cereals	4,000	866,000	North end Bear Creek Valley, Eagle Point area
Seed & Specialty Crops	935	665,000	North end Bear Creek Valley
Farm & Forestry	N/A	1,512,000	N/A
Dairy	N/A	4,910,000	Applegate & Bear Creek Valleys, & Sams Valley
Beef	N/A	7,727,000	Throughout the county
Sheep and Wool	N/A	253,000	N/A
Swine	N/A	141,000	N/A
Misc. Livestock	N/A	655,000	N/A
Poultry	300	3,815,000	Eagle Point and Central Point Areas & Applegate Valley
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>\$51,022,818</b>	

Source: Agricultural Extension Service  
 \*Some acreage figures are based on 1977 data.  
 \*\*Estimated value of documented sales over \$50.00.

**TABLE II**  
FARM CROPS AND USES IN JACKSON COUNTY 1990

FARM USE	ACRES	FARM SALES 1979-1990	CHANGE IN GROSS VALUE*
Tree Fruit & Nuts	9,083	\$40,682,000	(+) 56%
Vegetables and Nursery Crops	350	2,271,000	(+) 355%
Forage Crops	24,600	4,581,000	(+) 15%
Cereals	3,600	649,000	(-) 25%
Seed & Specialty Crops	520	836,000	(+) 26%
Farm & Forestry	N/A	4,990,000	(+) 230%
Dairy	N/A	2,938,000	(-) 40%
Beef	N/A	8,854,000	(+) 14.6%
Sheep and Wool	N/A	227,000	(-) 10%
Swine	N/A	413,000	(+) 192%
Misc. Livestock	N/A	1,910,000	(+) 192%
Poultry	300	2,844,000	(-) 25%
TOTAL:	N/A	\$71,195,000	(+) 40%

\*Gross sales figures are not adjusted for inflation which is estimated to be 25.7% for the study period.  
SOURCE: Agricultural Extension Service, "1990 Jackson County Estimated Gross Value of Agricultural Production".

- 6) Cattle Production: Beef cattle production is second only to pear production in gross value in Jackson County. However, the 14.6% increase in estimated gross value of beef cattle from 1979 to 1990 (from \$7,727,000 to \$8,854,000) has not kept up with inflation.

Commercial cattle production is characterized by a combination of three types of farm land and practices. A successful operation usually comprises 1) irrigated land used for production of forage crops and winter feeding areas, 2) spring grazing land on marginally productive soils in the uplands below 3600' altitude, and 3) summer grazing above approximately 3600' in Forest Resource areas. A significant part of the land available for summer grazing is federal land leased by cattle ranchers.

The soils in spring and summer grazing areas are predominantly Class V, or poorer. They are nonirrigated except where narrow strips of land are adjacent to streams. An estimated 200,000 acres of privately owned dryland foothill rangeland in the county are utilized for early spring livestock grazing. After the annual forage plants dry up, the livestock are moved to the approximately 36,500 acres of irrigated pastures in the county, or to land available for grazing on BLM lands (343,915 acres), USFS lands (52,681 acres) or private forest lands. Otherwise unproductive lands adjacent to more intensive livestock areas may be an important part of a viable livestock operation, providing seasonal grazing and winter feeding areas.

The livestock industry generally makes productive use of marginal lands in the county which do not have valuable forest or other agricultural uses. In addition, ranching operations increase the productive use of good forest land by enabling the dual use of the land.

- 7) Other Livestock Operations: In addition to the production of beef, livestock production in Jackson County includes sheep and wool production, swine and miscellaneous livestock, such as rabbits, goats and horses.

The estimated value of sheep and wool production declined by 10% between 1979 and 1990, but the Extension Service expects prices in the sheep industry to increase in 1992. Poultry production has declined approximately 25% in that same period. Estimated sales values for swine and miscellaneous livestock have increased significantly - up 192% for both categories. Overall livestock sales for products other than beef and dairy products have grown about 11%.

There are an estimated 10,000 horses in Jackson County that are used for recreational purposes and for commercial purposes including breeding, showing and sales. Sheep and rabbits are usually raised in the county as part-time farming enterprises, as 4-H or FFA projects, or in conjunction with other farming enterprises. In 1991 there were an estimated 4,400 ewes producing wool and lambs. Swine operations may be single enterprises or in conjunction with other farm enterprises. There were an estimated 250 sows producing 2 litters of 10 pigs each per year in 1991. Other varieties of livestock, including llamas, miniature horses, donkeys, buffalo, exotic deer, emus, pot belly pigs and ostriches, have been introduced on a small scale, and interest in such exotic species is expected to increase. Raising miscellaneous livestock is not limited to good agricultural soils areas.

- 8) Poultry: Poultry enterprises consist mainly of chicken egg production, with 267,000 commercial laying hens producing in the county in 1991. The raising of farm chickens and turkeys has been on a steady decline in the county for years. The change from 1979 to 1990 was a 25% decline, from \$3,815,000 to \$2,844,000. While that is a significant decline, poultry production continues to contribute about 4% of the county's gross farm sales.

Available Information on Soils: When this Plan was updated in 1979, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Soil Capability Classes, were mapped on approximately 593,000 acres of land in the county, or approximately 33 percent of the land area. The area not mapped at that time consisted predominantly of areas above 2,400 feet in elevation. In 1992 SCS soils data is

available for all public and private lands in Jackson County except U.S. Forest Service lands, and the Forest Service has soils inventory data for those lands. Soils inventory data is useful both for mapping agricultural lands and for determining the suitability of land for farm use on a case-by-case basis.

#### Agricultural Diversity:

Soils data, irrigation mapping, and other mapped information have enabled the County to designate suitable areas to be preserved for agricultural use. However, because of the diversity of agricultural types and the different field sizes needed for different crops and farm products, Jackson County has not characterized different farm zones based on parcel sizes. Instead, zoning designations have been based on general suitability for farm use. The appropriateness of a farm parcel for a particular use is determined case-by-case, based on the parcel sizes and income data included in the Oregon State University document Profiles of Commercial Agriculture for Southern Oregon.

#### Future Growth and the Regional Plan

There are several Statewide Planning Goals that help local governments plan and manage the growth of Oregon's cities and unincorporated communities. Goal 14 requires cities to estimate future growth and to plan and zone enough land to meet those needs. It calls for each city and surrounding county to establish an urban growth boundary (UGB) to identify and separate urbanized land from rural land. The land inside the boundary is where a city will grow over the next 20 years. Although few have done so, Oregon cities are also permitted to create a supply of land to meet their urbanization needs up to 30 years beyond those of the UGB, or 50 years out from the present. This is done through creation of Urban Reserves.

The Regional Problem Solving Project (RPS) for Jackson County initially began with the formation of a group of individuals who were concerned about rapid residential growth and the potential resultant loss of farmland around the cities in Jackson County. The RPS group, which consisted of representatives from Jackson County and the cities of Ashland, Central Point, Eagle Point, Medford, Phoenix and Talent, worked for more than a decade on a plan for how the County and the cities would accommodate a doubling of the region's population—which projections suggest could happen within the next 50 years. The RPS Process was utilized as a method of creating the Regional Plan and establishing Urban Reserve Areas for the participating communities. The RPS Plan, adopted as the Greater Bear Creek Valley Regional Plan (hereafter referred to as "*Regional Plan*") on November 23, 2011, outlines where the cities will accommodate urban growth over the next 50 years through the use of Urban Reserves. The *Regional Plan* delineates Urban Reserve Areas for each participating city except Ashland, which has no Urban Reserve Areas.

When the *Regional Plan* was adopted, as a condition of approval the Jackson County Board of Commissioner's was required to create an Agricultural Task Force. The Agricultural Task Force was to be made up of individuals representing expertise in fields such as agriculture, economic development, planning, etc. The purpose of the Agricultural Task Force is to 1) develop a program to assess the impacts on the agricultural economy of Jackson County arising from the loss of agricultural land and/or the ability to irrigate agricultural land, which may result from Urban Growth Boundary Amendments; and 2) identify, develop, and recommend potential mitigation measures, including financial strategies, to offset those impacts. The conclusions from the Agricultural Task Force, as well as goals and policies, are set forth in the Findings, Policies, and

Implementation Strategies Section below. The goals and policies in this section have been coordinated with, and endorse, the economic goals in the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan.

References: The first three references below are the primary documents on which the 1978 and 1982 Agricultural Element of the Comprehensive Plan were based. Items 5, 6, 7 and 8 are documents used for updating the Plan in 1992. Item 9 is the document used for updating the Plan in 2014.

- 1) Phase One Report of the Jackson County Agricultural Land Use Committee, September 1, 1977.
- 2) Phase Two Report of the Jackson County Agricultural Land Use Committee, May 23, 1978.
- 3) Agricultural Land Identification Study, Jackson County Department of Planning and Development, a series of land use, soils, and irrigation maps.
- 4) Selected references (a list of these references is contained within the agricultural lands background document).
- 5) Profiles of Commercial Agriculture for Southern Oregon, District IV, Jackson County, Oregon State University Extension Service, Department of Geography, Special Report #698, 1983.
- 6) 1990 Jackson County Estimated Gross Value of Agricultural Production, Estimated Value of Agricultural Production and Informative Statistics for Jackson County, Jackson County office of the Oregon State University Extension Service.
- 7) Business and Employment Outlook, 1992, Economic Structure and Analysis, District 8, Jackson and Josephine County, Volume I, Oregon Employment Division.
- 8) 1987 Census of Agriculture, Special Tabulations, U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- 9) Greater Bear Creek Valley Regional Plan (Regional Plan). Bear Creek Regional Problem Solving Participating Agencies. November 23, 2011.

## **FINDINGS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:**

### **1**

#### **FINDING:**

Agriculture in Jackson County consists of tree fruits, livestock and related forage crops, grains and seed products, berries and vegetables. Exclusive Farm Use zoning has been developed to recognize the need to protect all types of farm uses and provide for the variety of management and farming practices that are utilized.

**POLICY: LAND SHALL BE DESIGNATED EXCLUSIVE FARM USE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:**

- A) AGRICULTURAL LAND DOES NOT INCLUDE LAND WITHIN ACKNOWLEDGED URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARIES OR LAND WITHIN AREAS ACKNOWLEDGED AS EXCEPTIONS TO STATEWIDE GOALS 3 OR 4.
- B) AGRICULTURAL LAND COMPRISES:
- i) LAND CLASSIFIED BY THE U.S. SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE (SCS) AS PREDOMINANTLY CLASS I-IV SOILS.
  - ii) LAND IN OTHER SOIL CLASSES THAT IS SUITABLE FOR FARM USE AS DEFINED IN ORS 215.203(2)(A), TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION SOIL FERTILITY; SUITABILITY FOR GRAZING; CLIMATIC CONDITIONS; EXISTING AND FUTURE AVAILABILITY OF WATER FOR FARM IRRIGATION PURPOSES; EXISTING LAND USE PATTERNS; TECHNOLOGICAL AND ENERGY INPUTS REQUIRED; AND ACCEPTED FARM PRACTICES.
  - iii) LAND THAT IS IN CAPABILITY CLASSES OTHER THAN CLASSES I-IV THAT IS ADJACENT TO OR INTERMINGLED WITH LANDS IN CAPABILITY CLASSES I-IV WITHIN A FARM UNIT SHALL BE INVENTORIED AS AGRICULTURAL LANDS EVEN THOUGH THIS LAND MAY NOT BE CROPPED OR GRAZED.
  - iv) LAND THAT IS NECESSARY TO PERMIT FARM PRACTICES TO BE UNDERTAKEN ON ADJACENT OR NEARBY LANDS; BUT WHICH WOULD NOT OTHERWISE QUALIFY FOR THE EXCLUSIVE FARM USE DISTRICT, SHALL BE ZONED EXCLUSIVE FARM USE.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

This policy has been implemented through the creation of the Exclusive Farm Use zoning district and map designation which set forth standards for development and division of agricultural land consistent with Oregon Revised Statutes 215, and Statewide Planning Goal 3. Land that is not zoned Exclusive Farm Use may qualify for farm assessment on the basis of use and income. Unzoned farmland must conform with applicable sections of ORS 308.370 to 308.406.

## 2

FINDING:

Some agricultural land has special characteristics that make it especially important for the continuation of the existing agricultural economy. Oregon Administrative Rules Chapter 660, Division 33 defines High Value Farm Land and specifies stricter standards for some types of development on land that qualifies as High Value Farm Land.

**POLICY: LAND SHALL BE DESIGNATED HIGH VALUE FARM LAND WHEN A TRACT IS COMPOSED PREDOMINANTLY OF SOILS THAT ARE:**

- A) **AND CLASSIFIED PRIME, UNIQUE, CLASS I OR CLASS II; OR**
- B) **NOT IRRIGATED AND CLASSIFIED PRIME, UNIQUE, CLASS I OR CLASS II; OR**
- C) **GROWING SPECIFIED PERENNIALS GROWN FOR MARKETING OR RESEARCH PURPOSES INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO NURSERY STOCK, BERRIES, FRUITS, NUTS, CHRISTMAS TREES OR VINEYARDS, BUT NOT INCLUDING SEED CROPS, HAY, PASTURE OR ALFALFA. A FINDING THAT A TRACT IS GROWING SPECIFIED PERENNIALS SHALL BE BASED UPON THE MOST RECENT AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE TAKEN BEFORE NOVEMBER 4, 1993.**

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:**

- A) This policy has been implemented through noting in LDO Chapter 4, Exclusive Farm Use District, those uses that are subject to special standards when they are proposed to be located on High Value Farm Land, and requiring a determination whether a tract qualifies as High Value Farm Land when reviewing a proposal for any such use.
- B) High Value Farm Land will be mapped as a separate zoning district, as an Area of Special Concern, or some other appropriate zoning map designation, in the next periodic review after December 31, 1994.
- C) At the time that High Value Farm Land is mapped, soils that are specially suited to orchard or vineyard development shall be considered for inclusion in the High Value map designation, even if they would not otherwise qualify as High Value Farm Land.

### **3**

**FINDING:**

Incompatible land uses, such as residential developments, create problems for the farmer. The farmer may be subjected to vandalism theft, harassment, and increased liability because of such activities. Proper zoning assists in preventing incompatible land uses from locating adjacent to farmland. Zoning alone does not solve the problems caused by existing urban and suburban development adjacent to agricultural land. In many of these conflicting situations there is not enough land area to create sufficient buffering to protect the farmer.

**POLICY: CONFLICTS BETWEEN AGRICULTURAL AND NONAGRICULTURAL LAND USES SHALL BE MINIMIZED BY THE FOLLOWING:**

- A) **THE COUNTY, IN COOPERATION WITH THE CITIES, SHALL DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT MINIMUM SETBACKS TO BUFFER FARM USES FROM NONAGRICULTURAL LAND USES ON THE PERIPHERY OF URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARIES ABUTTING AGRICULTURAL LAND. ADDITIONAL BUFFERING TECHNIQUES SUCH AS FENCING AND LANDSCAPING SHALL BE ENCOURAGED ON THE NONFARM LAND.**
- B) **THE COUNTY SHALL ZONE RESIDENTIAL LANDS THAT ARE DEVELOPED WITHIN AGRICULTURAL AREAS TO ALLOW MINIMUM PARCEL SIZES NO SMALLER THAN 2.5 ACRES IN SIZE. A 2.5-ACRE MINIMUM MAY BE ESTABLISHED ONLY WHERE THE EXISTING AVERAGE LOT OR PARCEL SIZE IS LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO 2.5 ACRES AND IT CAN BE CLEARLY ESTABLISHED THAT REQUIREMENTS FOR BUFFERING RESIDENTIAL USES FROM FARM LANDS CAN BE MET ON THE RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY.**
- C) **LANDS THAT ARE DEVELOPED AS RESIDENTIAL USES WITHIN AGRICULTURAL AREAS SHALL NOT BE ALLOWED TO INCREASE IN AREA, AND "FILL-IN" DEVELOPMENT OF SUCH LANDS SHALL BE SET BACK A MINIMUM OF 200 FEET FROM LAND ZONED EXCLUSIVE FARM USE, EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN THE LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE.**

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:**

- A) The Jackson County Land Development Ordinances and other applicable ordinances shall conform with the above policy. These ordinances should prevent the expansion of pockets of rural and suburban development that lie within agricultural uses.
- B) Where urban and agricultural lands lie adjacent to each other, any additional urban development will be managed by requiring that: development be set back from agricultural land; adequate security fencing be constructed; or, special site design or easements be utilized.
- C) Amendments to the location of city urban growth boundaries shall either follow roads, streams, or other natural or significant man-made boundaries which create a physical separation between agricultural and nonagricultural lands or shall include buffering requirements to protect farm operations from conflicts with urban uses.
- D) When Urban Growth Boundaries or Growth Management Agreements are expanded or otherwise revised, growth into agricultural areas shall be avoided. If

expansion into an agricultural area becomes unavoidable, it shall be directed to that available land which is the least productive in terms of existing farm uses or agricultural capability. Requirements for minimum setbacks and buffering by urban land users shall be included in any such agreement.

## 4

### **FINDING:**

Jackson County recognizes that nonfarm uses may be permitted in Exclusive Farm Use zoning districts. It is also understood that those nonagricultural uses can cause serious agricultural impacts.

### **POLICY: THE PRIORITY USE OF FARM LAND SHALL BE FARM USES.**

### **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:**

Land use actions subject to review as conditional uses under the Jackson County Land Development Ordinance shall comply with this policy.

## 5

### **FINDING:**

Agriculture continues to be one of the most important sectors of the Rogue Valley's regional economy. Irrigation is critical to remaining competitive with other regions with milder and wetter climates.

Effective economic development actions necessary to diversify the County's agricultural economic base require an understanding of the operation and financial feasibility of an irrigation district when lands within that district urbanize. Prior to the Regional Plan process, irrigation districts were not recognized as infrastructure providers, and as such, were often not included in the initial phases of the land use planning process. During the Regional Plan adoption process the Jackson County Board of Commissioners recognized the County's irrigation districts as instrumental in maintaining and enhancing the County's agricultural economy. Chapter 5, Section 2.8 of the Regional Plan acknowledges that the irrigation districts should be collaborated with and pro-actively engaged in the conceptual planning of Rogue Valley Urban Reserve Areas (URAs) when a Conceptual Plan proposal for a UGB Amendment into a URA is submitted. Jackson County and local jurisdictions have an opportunity to work with irrigation districts to ensure that plans for the URAs and UGBs reflect the opportunities for outcomes which are mutually compatible and beneficial for the local jurisdictions and the irrigation districts.

As per the Regional Plan Element, Chapter 5, Section 2.8, of the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan, an application for an UGB Amendment into a designated URA shall include

a Conceptual Land Use Plan. Preparation of the Conceptual Land Use Plan shall include collaboration with applicable irrigation districts.

In addition, the Regional Plan, Chapter 5, Section 2.22, included a requirement that the Agricultural Task Force “develop a program to assess the impacts on the agricultural economy of Jackson County arising from the loss of agricultural land and/or the ability to irrigate agricultural land, which may result from Urban Growth Boundary Amendments.” The Agricultural Task Force was also required to “identify, develop, and recommend potential mitigation measures, including financial strategies, to offset those impacts. Appropriate mitigation measures shall be applied as conditions of approval to Urban Growth Boundary Amendment proposals.”

The Conceptual Land Use Plan will provide the opportunity for the irrigation districts to assess impacts to their systems at the earliest possible time. However, considering the general nature of the Conceptual Land Use Plan, only general comments will likely be provided by the irrigation districts. Those general comments shall be used to:

- Assess land proposed to be brought into the UGB;
- Refine the Conceptual Land Use Plan;
- Provide the affected land owners ample notice of potential mitigation measures; and
- Provide the basis for more specific mitigation measures at the time of Zone Change and development of the affected land.

**POLICY: THE COUNTY AND CITIES WILL BRING AFFECTED IRRIGATION DISTRICTS INTO THE CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLANNING PROCESS AS PART OF URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY AMENDMENTS WHEN ADDING URBAN RESERVE AREAS OR PORTIONS THEREOF. IRRIGATION DISTRICTS WILL BE RECOGNIZED AS AN INFRASTRUCTURE PROVIDER ALONG WITH OTHER PROVIDERS LISTED IN URBAN GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND URBAN RESERVE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS.**

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:**

The protocol for this Implementation Strategy shall be as follows:

- A) UGB Amendment. Prior to approval of a UGB Amendment application into a URA by a City or Jackson County, the City and County shall coordinate with affected irrigation districts to:
  - i) Identify existing irrigation infrastructure on lands proposed for inclusion in the UGB;
  - ii) Evaluate potential impacts on the operational ability of the applicable irrigation district to provide irrigation for agricultural purposes;
  - iii) Evaluate existing irrigation conveyance system and infrastructure demands and potential system modifications identified by the irrigation district; and
  - iv) Prepare a general set of potential mitigation measures to be applied at time of development.

- B) Monitoring for Compliance with the Conceptual Plan. Implementation of appropriate mitigation measures identified in the jurisdiction's Conceptual Land Use Plan shall be reported on in the monitoring process outlined in Chapter 5, Section 4 of the Regional Plan.

#### Mitigation Measures

- A) Mitigation Measures may include, but are not limited to the following:
- i) Irrigation canal relocation
  - ii) Irrigation canal piping
  - iii) Water rights transfer
  - iv) Urban Reserve Area property owners quit claim water rights to irrigation district
  - v) Co-location of irrigation district/public works facilities (subject to water quality requirements)

## 6

### **FINDING:**

The pursuit of beneficial economic development in adjacent existing agricultural land requires the implementation of more sophisticated methods for conserving and delivering irrigation water to both large- and small-scale agricultural operations. Water for Irrigation, Stream, and Economy (WISE) is a regionally-supported water management project that will improve the health of the Bear Creek and Little Butte Creek watersheds in Jackson County. This collaborative effort will enhance the viability of regional agriculture, critical habitat, and quality of life.

**POLICY 6.1: THE COUNTY WILL SUPPORT PROJECTS SUCH AS THE WISE CONCEPT AND LOCAL DISTRICT PIPING PROJECTS AND SUBSCRIBE TO ITS RECOMMENDED BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES<sup>2</sup> FOR CONSERVING AND DELIVERING IRRIGATION WATER TO ALL FARMING OPERATIONS.**

**POLICY 6.2: THE COUNTY WILL SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR IRRIGATION DISTRICTS WHICH INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO, IN-STREAM LEASING, QUIT CLAIMS, EXITS AND IN-STREAM TRANSFERS.**

**POLICY 6.3: THE COUNTY WILL PURSUE OTHER INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES TO ENSURE THE VIABILITY OF LOCAL IRRIGATION DISTRICTS THAT HAVE PROVEN SUCCESSFUL ELSEWHERE AND INSTITUTIONALIZE THOSE STRATEGIES IN LOCAL ORDINANCES.**

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<sup>2</sup> A best practice is a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark.

## 7

### FINDING:

Taking land out of agricultural production made more viable by irrigation, through urbanization via annexation, has a negative impact on irrigation districts and the irrigators they serve. Of particular concern is the further fragmentation of farms, the loss of district acreage, and the resulting operational and financial impacts on district deliveries and assessments.

**POLICY: THE COUNTY WILL SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MITIGATION MEASURES TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED VIABILITY OF THE IRRIGATION DISTRICTS, THE REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY, AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND FARMS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO URBAN USES. THE MITIGATION MEASURES SHALL BE INCLUDED AS CONDITIONS PLACED ON URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY AMENDMENTS INTO A DESIGNATED URBAN RESERVE AREA.**

## 8

### FINDING:

Maintaining and improving the overall quality of life in the County is a qualitative measure that is not easy to quantify but is and will continue to be important for the Region's economic prosperity and preservation of the agricultural sector and its infrastructure. Effective regulations can provide strong support for meeting economic challenges.

**POLICY: THE COUNTY AND CITIES SHALL PERIODICALLY EVALUATE THEIR REGULATIONS GOVERNING URA/UGB-RELATED TRANSITION AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT, PARTICULARLY AS THEY RELATE TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND ITS COMPATIBILITY WITH ADJACENT LANDS, TO ENSURE THAT THE REGULATIONS ARE CONSISTENT WITH "BEST PRACTICES". REGULATIONS FOUND TO NO LONGER BE APPROPRIATE SHOULD BE AMENDED AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE THEREAFTER.**