



Introduction

Following find the collective effort of the Restore Oregon Barns Taskforce (“The Taskforce”) to develop a Mission Statement, along with a delineation of tasks and steps. We hope you find it a useful start.

Please feel free to comment, accordingly. As the Taskforce serves under the Advocacy Committee, which serves under the Board, this is intended as a preliminary effort: the Taskforce will now seeks input and support from both the Advocacy Committee and the Board in order to adopt a final version of this document as policy.

The Mission of the Restore Oregon Barns Taskforce

To promote and advocate for the protection and preservation of Oregon's historic barns and related elements, in an effort to unify and strengthen the landscape of our statewide rural agricultural architectural heritage against the further diminishing of these significant and defining resources.

Goals of the Taskforce include:

- **Providing public education to augment interest and awareness visibility through workshops, tours and online website resource direction.**
- **Advancing base data through the assembly of current information, and additional survey and documentation.**
- **Advocating for a more supportive preservation environment through the analysis; and direct addressing of technical, financial and regulatory issues.**
- **Assisting property owners in: the removal of barriers to restoration, rehabilitation and adaptive re-use, and establishing new sources for information and direct support.**

Barns and Agricultural Structures In Oregon - A Not Uncommon Challenge, With Some Uniquely Oregon Qualities



As land use patterns, regulations, and agricultural practices have changed in recent decades, many barns and related elements of our agricultural heritage have experienced obsolescence, neglect, deterioration, and demolition.

These structures are not mere anachronistic remnants of earlier periods. Styles tend to reflect responses to sub-regional uses, climate, and craftsmanship. As they were utilitarian structures, they were among the most durable wood structures of their time. They were typically built with ingenuity and quality reflective of the underlying pride of farms, farmers, and agricultural communities. Elements potentially of significance might include: smokehouses, fences, landscape treatments, and other associated structures.

Oregon is not atypical of many other states, particular larger western states, where agricultural areas and historic resources have been in many ways less-supported than urbanizing portions of the nation. At the same time, Oregon, through it's Statewide Land Use Goals, has been very—and in some cases, rigidly—protective of agricultural land and zoning. While this has done an excellent job of limiting redevelopment of such lands, an unintended consequence has been an additional resultant lack of flexibility necessary to establish new and fitting economic uses for barns in these highly restricted zones. Rural counties, lacking the necessary resources and/or political heft, are left acquiescing to the Land Use Goals, unable to undertake the effort that would be required to address this issue at the statewide level.

Deterioration and Loss of Barns Results in Lost Value and Economic Opportunity

Today, public, private and non-profit programs and organizations in every state are addressing in various ways how to preserve the diminishing resource that is our historic agricultural heritage.

While this is true in Oregon as well, work to date has not been particularly targeted, cohesive or integrated. Initial surveys have occurred at the state level and by a small number of counties. A Century Farm and Ranch program has helped highlight and acknowledge particular homesteads that have been in continuous family ownership. Restore Oregon's Most Endangered Places program targets particularly threatened and significant examples. However, thus far, there has been little coordinated work done to specifically outreach to agricultural communities, and to assist in the preservation of structures.

The loss is not merely historic. As the number and integrity of these structures diminish, there is an accompanying loss of economic value of these structures. This is true in terms of their real estate value, as well as their ability to contribute to the generation of active revenue. Both these attributes contribute to lower assessed values, and lower tax basis' and other economic accruals.

The losses to the state are thus cumulative, both in terms of heritage and economic benefit. It's for these reasons that Restore Oregon has established the Barn Taskforce to identify issues and challenges, and remedies and opportunities.



Barn Taskforce Prioritized Preservation Strategies

The following has been identified as a general hierarchy of barn preservation goals, depending on the circumstances and condition of the respective resource. This ranking should be considered highly flexible, as the historic, economic, and contextual circumstances will often influence the practicality and desirability of particular approaches.

1. Preserve; original use

Whenever possible, preserving resources in their original use is desirable. This may be rarely achievable, given economic and contextual challenges.

2. Preserve; new use

Preservation of a resource in an appropriate manner and on its original site will best perpetuate its contribution.

3. Preserve on new site

When preservation on the original site is not achievable, relocation to a new site should be considered as an alternative to demolition

4. Salvage

When preservation of a resource is not achievable, salvage may be considered. If possible this should include dismantling in anticipation of future reconstruction, or otherwise preserving the materials for appropriate and highest-purpose re-use.

5. Document

In all cases, written and visual documentation should occur, as these structures and their settings are fragile. In some cases, this approach may be the only recourse for a resource.

As this effort, including further inventories and assessment, progresses further, the specific range of structure types intended to be addressed by any resulting initiatives will need to be further defined.



Restore Oregon Barn Initiative: An Outline For Action

Existing and Useful Data Needs must be gathered, assessed, and advanced:

Inventories:

Inventories at the county and state level need to be assessed to determine their completeness. Gaps need to be identified, in order to address how best to remedy. This may include statewide or county-by-county historic resource surveys. This may also include proposed partnership with SHPO to examine methods of streamlining survey and inventory data acquisition for eventual inclusion in the OHSD.

Programmatic Survey:

A national survey of barn preservation programs elsewhere has been undertaken, and may require continued analysis to assess efficacy and strategies for various initiative considerations.

Other Sources:

Voluntary submission as a result of other forms of outreach (such as efforts undertaken in the identification of Century Farms) should also be identified, incorporated, and built upon.

Broad Issues need to be identified and addressed through education and advocacy efforts:

Inequity:

Barns and other resources related to our agricultural heritage have received little attention and support proportional to less rural resources.

Deterioration:

Surveys are needed to identify the level and nature of neglect and need.

Legacy:

The relationship of Barn and agricultural community contributions, the significance of styles, and their place in heritage preservation needs to be defined and articulated.

Visibility:

New efforts are required to publicize efforts and initiatives, so as to create and maintain interest and support.

Economics:

The accruing loss of economic value from deterioration and under-utilization needs to be assessed in order to rationalize a broader legislative effort.

Regulatory:



The role of regulatory limitations, and the specific effect of those limitations, needs to be identified in order to identify opportunistic remedies.

Synchronicity:

The opportunity value associated with the expanding economies of Agricultural and Food Tourism need be identified. Partners also need to be identified for whom a statewide barn enhancement program would be of value. Such partners should include: farm bureaus, commodity boards, agricultural agencies, Granges, media, associated building trades, 4-H and Future Farmers clubs, extension services, planning agencies, agricultural financial institutions, and agricultural tourism entities.

Issues and Opportunities specifically meaningful to the agricultural communities needs to be the focus for the purposes of : determining and disseminating existing information, and identifying/establishing appropriate and useful tools. These tools could include:

Technical Support:

To assess existing conditions and propose physical remedies. Existing programs and information should be identified, gathered, with consideration given to how to best make these resources available.

Design Support:

Identify sources for design and permitting support.

Financial Support:

Identify/Establish grant-based programs for direct assistance.

Resource Support:

Establish a single online website for the sharing of resources, general information, publications, contractor lists, et cetera.

Statewide Advocacy and Support will result in major/primary regulatory and incentive tools for directly supporting statewide barn enhancement efforts. Such targeted goals would include:

Direct Funding:

Direct subsidies through distribution of funds for barn improvements

Indirect Funding:

Rehabilitation Tax Credits should be advocated for, targeting barns that meet certain prescriptive requirements.

Regulatory Reform:

Local and legislative obstacles to barn re-purposing need to be fully defined, with a strategy developed to allow specific flexibilities for historic barns. This could include



building code and permitting challenges, as well as reductions in fees for such approvals.

Conclusion

We welcome your review and refining direction, in order to successfully advance this significant and timely effort.