Update on Oregon's Agricultural Protection Program: A Land Use Perspective

by

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Originally published in NATURAL RESOURCES JOURNAL
21 NAT. RESOURCES J. 57 (1981)

UPDATE ON OREGON'S AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION PROGRAM: A LAND USE PERSPECTIVE*

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INTRODUCTION

As recent trends to enact agricultural protection policies have matured, attention has focused on monitoring and evaluating programs already implemented.[1] Assessing the success of particular policies or programs involves two measuring criteria: political acceptability and land use effectiveness.[2] The political perspective emphasizes programs which enjoy public and political support.[3] This measure of policy success does not, however, ensure durable or widespread program effectiveness. An equally important dimension of policy success must be based on land use impact. Does the policy carry out the farmland protection objective? While political support is essential, faulty program development or ineffective implementation may contribute little to these land use goals.

In an article published by this journal last July, this author outlined components and policies of Oregon's comprehensive agricultural land

*This manuscript was completed while the author was a North Atlantic Treaty Organization Fellow. The author wishes to acknowledge the valuable research assistance provided by Harriet Phelps-Furuseth. Any errors are the author's.

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1. *See generally* P. AMATO, R. BARROWS, D. FODROCZI, J. JOHNSON & P. WILEY, PLANNING TO PRESERVE AGRICULTURAL LAND (1979); R. COUGHLIN, D. BERRY, K. BIERI, D. BOYECE, J. KOLHASE, E. LEONARDO, J. PICKETT, T. PLAUT, B. STEVENS, A. STRONG, D. VINING & K. WALLACE, SAVING THE GARDEN: THE PRESERVATION OF FARMLAND AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTALLY VALUABLE LAND (1977); R. DUNFORD, FARMLAND TAX RELIEF ALTERNATIVES: USE VALUE ASSESSMENT VS. CIRCUIT-BREAKER REBATES (1979); Furuseth, *If We Are Really Serious About Protecting Agricultural Land in North Carolina . . .*, 6 CAROLINA PLAN. 40 (1980); H. GAMBLE, O. SAUERLANDER & R. DOWNING, THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ACT 319, THE PENNSYLVANIA FARMLAND AND FORESTLAND ASSESSMENT ACT (1977); Hansen & Schwartz, *Prime Land Preservation: The California Land Conservation Act*, 31:5 J. SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION 198 (1976); L. KROGH, 1979 PROGRESS REPORT, GENERAL STATUTES–SEC 22-2cc; ACT FOR THE PRESERVATION OF CONNECTICUT AGRICULTURAL LANDS (1979).

2. W. BRYANT, FARMLAND PRESERVATION ALTERNATIVES IN SEMI-SUBURBAN AREAS (1975); R. Mundie, Farmland Preservation Programs: Evaluating Effectiveness (1980) (paper presented at the American Planning Association Convention, San Francisco, California, April 13, 1980).

3. *See* W. BRYANT, FARMLAND PRESERVATION ALTERNATIVES IN SEMI-SUBURBAN AREAS (1975).

protection program and evaluated its effectiveness.[4] Given the strong measure of public support, Oregon's program could be perceived as a policy success. At the time the article was written, however, data on conversion of agricultural lands to urban development were quite limited. Only a few cases were known, primarily in western Oregon, where the policy was under challenge in planning hearings and the courts. Large scale data on farmland dynamics at the county and regional scale were not available. This information would have provided insight into the program's ability to protect and manage agricultural resources. As a consequence, the land use dimension of policy effectiveness was limited to a cautious review.

Since publication, long awaited reports of the *1978 Census of Agriculture* have begun to become available.[5] Among the earliest data reported and published are preliminary results for Oregon and its constituent counties.[6] The *Census of Agriculture* presents a unique and valuable data source for answering the land use question. Its importance is twofold. First, the data provide complete coverage of agricultural land use morphology and change for the entire state of Oregon. Although the countywide data base precludes detailed analyses of spatial aspects of land transfer at the municipal and metropolitan level, for overview purposes the data are quite adequate. The *Census of Agriculture* also contains specific information on types of agricultural activities, agricultural marketing data, and farm operator characteristics.

Second, the census period (1974-78) coincides with the implementation phase and early years of Oregon's agricultural protection program.[7] Land use decisions made during this time reflect policies mandated by the new program.

Can the Oregon agricultural protection program be regarded as a success, from a land use perspective? Using this *Census of Agriculture* data it is now possible to answer this question by examining the dynamism of agricultural land use since program adoption. While the general nature of the data cannot give more than a broad overview, or define other economic and physical variables which affect the supply and demand for agricultural land resources, the comprehensive geo-

4. Furuseth, *The Oregon Agricultural Protection Program: A Review and Assessment*, 20 NAT. RES. J. 603 (1980).

5. Plagued with a variety of misfortunes, the latest information is that the publication of individual state preliminary reports will be complete by late Spring 1981.

6. *See generally* BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, U.S. DEP'T OF COMMERCE, 1978 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE PRELIMINARY REPORT OREGON (1980) [hereinafter cited as 1978 CENSUS].

7. OREGON LAND CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, STATEWIDE PLANNING GOALS AND GUIDELINES at 1 (1975).

graphical and temporal scope of the data still provides valuable insight into the effectiveness of the Oregon program.

STATEWIDE TRENDS

A comparison of the *1978 Census of Agriculture* (Preliminary Report) with the previous two censuses shows that agricultural resource activities continue to be viable in most areas of Oregon, and in many respects appear to be growing. This vigorous use of agricultural land is somewhat surprising, given the rapid population growth rate during the same period. The projected rate of growth in Oregon between 1974-1978 was 7.8 percent, or 178,000 new residents.[8] Although the link among urbanization, rapid increases in population, and accelerating rates of farmland conversion is clearly established by previous researchers,[9] the total land in farm use increased by almost 180,000 acres during this period[10] (see Table 1). This increase may be attributed to expansion of agricultural land uses in sparsely populated areas[11] and a sharp and significant decline in farmland losses of urbanizing counties.[12] The rate of farmland idling for areas undergoing rapid urbanization has decreased since 1974.[13] In coastal Lincoln County, for example, the rate of farmland decline has dropped from 28 percent in the five years preceeding the Oregon agricultural land protection program to 1.5 percent since implementation.[14] Concurrently, population in the county has jumped by 4.8 percent and 15.9 percent, respectively.[15]

The level of capital investment and the age structure of Oregon farm operators are also important in terms of future agricultural sta-

8. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, U.S. DEP'T OF COMMERCE, ESTIMATES OF THE POPULATION OF OREGON COUNTIES AND METROPOLITAN AREAS: JULY 1, 1973 AND 1974 at 3 (1975) [hereinafter cited as CENSUS ESTIMATES 1973 AND 1974].

9. *See generally* Berry, *Effects of Urbanization on Agricultural Activities*, 9:3 GROWTH AND CHANGE 2 (1978); I & II ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE IN THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF PERI-URBAN AREAS (1979).

10. 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6, at 1.

11. D. AAMODT, OREGON'S PRIME AGRICULTURAL LANDS: AN AREA OF CRITICAL STATE CONCERN 26 (1975).

12. *See generally* 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6.

13. 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6, at 1.

14. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, U.S. DEP'T OF COMMERCE, 1969 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE (1972) [hereinafter cited as 1969 CENSUS]; 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6.

15. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, U.S. DEP'T OF COMMERCE, 1970 CENSUS OF POPULATION: OREGON at 39-15 (1971) [hereinafter cited as 1970 CENSUS]; CENSUS ESTIMATES 1973 AND 1974, *supra* note 8, at 3; BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, U.S. DEP'T OF COMMERCE, ESTIMATES OF THE POPULATION OF OREGON COUNTIES AND METROPOLITAN AREAS: JULY 1, 1977 (REVISED) AND 1978 (PROVISIONAL) 3 (1979) [hereinafter cited as CENSUS ESTIMATES 1977 AND 1978].

TABLE 1

Agricultural Land Use and Population Change in Oregon Counties and Regions, 1974-78*

	Population Δ 1974-1978	*Percentage Δ 1974-78*	*Land in Farms (Acres)** 1974*	*1978*	*Δ Between 1974-1978*	*(Percentage Δ)*
Oregon	178,000	.078	18,241,445	18,419,254	177,809	.009
Willamette Valley	99,600	.064	1,819,306	1,804,901	− 14,405	.007
Benton	4,900	.080	130,012	117,892	− 12,120	−.093
Clackamas	27,800	.138	174,891	170,823	− 4,068	−.023
Lane	21,100	.089	264,123	266,762	2,639	.009
Linn	5,500	.068	356,533	356,142	− 391	−.001
Marion	18,400	.112	295,285	307,866	12,581	.042
Multnomah	−14,800	−.027	37,511	42,801	5,290	.141
Polk	5,700	.150	200,632	194,638	− 5,994	−.029
Washington	25,300	.132	161,050	152,729	− 8,321	−.051
Yamhill	5,700	.129	199,269	195,248	− 4,021	−.020
Southern Oregon	29,000	.127	1,010,651	840,099	−170,552	−.168
Douglas	7,300	.089	480,289	454,198	− 26,091	−.054
Jackson	13,000	.118	489,607	348,783	−140,824	−.287
Josephine	8,700	.193	40,755	37,118	− 3,637	−.089
Coastal Oregon	11,700	.064	433,121	423,828	− 9,293	−.021
Clatsop	1,200	.040	26,560	22,624	− 3,936	−.148
Columbia	800	.025	69,912	75,674	5,762	.082
Coos	2,300	.038	159,225	168,304	9,079	.057

Curry	1,700	.122	99,046	81,691	− 17,355	−.175
Lincoln	4,300	.159	34,051	33,511	− 540	−.015
Tillamook	1,400	.075	44,327	42,024	− 2,303	−.051
Eastern Oregon	37,700	.127	14,978,367	14,970,009	− 8,358	−.0005
Baker	500	.032	799,921	952,321	152,400	.190
Crook	600	.051	1,017,660	880,061	−137,601	−.135
Deschutes	12,200	.305	120,934	144,974	24,040	.198
Gilliam	300	.157	744,653	696,875	− 47,778	−.064
Grant	200	.026	1,087,736	985,063	−102,673	−.094
Harney	500	.068	1,454,745	1,471,415	16,670	.011
Hood River	1,500	.108	25,204	27,031	1,827	.072
Jefferson	1,300	.134	458,304	617,001	158,697	.346
Klamath	6,200	.116	773,745	747,960	− 25,785	−.033
Lake	700	.109	912,300	849,007	− 63,293	−.069
Malheur	1,700	.071	1,477,029	1,484,353	7,324	.004
Morrow	2,300	.479	1,107,480	1,164,998	57,518	.051
Sherman	− 400	−.190	474,495	463,415	− 11,080	−.023
Umatilla	7,100	.151	1,386,605	1,422,674	36,069	.026
Union	1,500	.068	466,571	467,534	963	.002
Wallowa	600	.090	773,353	769,998	− 3,355	−.004
Wasco	900	.044	1,191,439	1,024,521	−166,918	−.140
Wheeler	0	0	706,191	800,808	94,617	.133

*This table was compiled from data found in BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, U.S. DEP'T. OF COMMERCE, ESTIMATES OF THE POPULATION OF OREGON COUNTIES AND METROPOLITAN AREAS: JULY 1, 1973 AND 1974 (1975) and BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, U.S. DEP'T. OF COMMERCE, 1978 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE PRELIMINARY REPORT OREGON (1980).

**The regional and county data do not sum to the state total owing to the survey methods of the 1978 Census of Agriculture. The sampling design for the statistical area segment sample, which was used to supplement the mail sample, did not provide reliable estimates at the county level. Consequently, this component of the census data reflects an aggregate statewide estimate.

bility. Census findings from 1969 through 1978 show that the value of land and buildings and the market value of machinery and equipment on farms rose steadily.[16] By converting the data into constant 1978 dollars, the value of land and buildings (per farm) increased 18 percent, and the estimated market value of all machinery and equipment (statewide) recorded a 27 percent increase between 1974 and 1978.[17] These data imply that uncertainties and conflicts surrounding agriculture are not sufficient to discourage expansive capital investments. Lack of new capital investments marks a faltering agricultural economy, and actually accelerates the decline.[18]

Demographic data show that the mean age of operators in Oregon is declining.[19] In 1969, the average farm operator was 51.9 years of age.[20] Five years later, the mean age rose to 52.4; however, most recently it dropped to 49.7.[21] The latest shifts, especially when taken with a 30.3 percent increase in the number of farms,[22] suggest an influx of younger persons into farming and ranching. Previous investigations have noted that a pattern of aging farm operators is indicative of declining agricultural fortunes. Faced with an uncertain future, farming is no longer attractive to young people.[23] Consequently, the latest Oregon data are encouraging indicators.

Both data sets imply that Oregon agriculture is robust statewide. Increasing numbers of farm operators, increased value of capital investments, and a younger farm population all affirm the earlier findings. Since implementation, Oregon's agricultural land use appears to be undergoing healthy expansion.

A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In order to gain additional insight into patterns of agricultural change, selected *Census of Agriculture* data were disaggregated on a regional basis. This regionalization strategy follows a standard grouping employed by many social science researchers[24] using socioeco-

16. 1969 CENSUS, *supra* note 14; 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6, at 1-2.

17. The calculations were derived from *Financial and Business Statistics*, 61:5 FEDERAL RESERVE BULLETIN A53 (May 1975).

18. Williamson, *Farm-Nonfarm Land Use Conflicts, Uncertainties, and Long-Term Investment in Agriculture*, in LAND USE PLANNING IN RURAL AREAS: ISSUES, PROBLEMS, ALTERNATIVES 13 (L. Danielson ed. 1977).

19. These data include corporations and other organizations.

20. 1969 CENSUS, *supra* note 14.

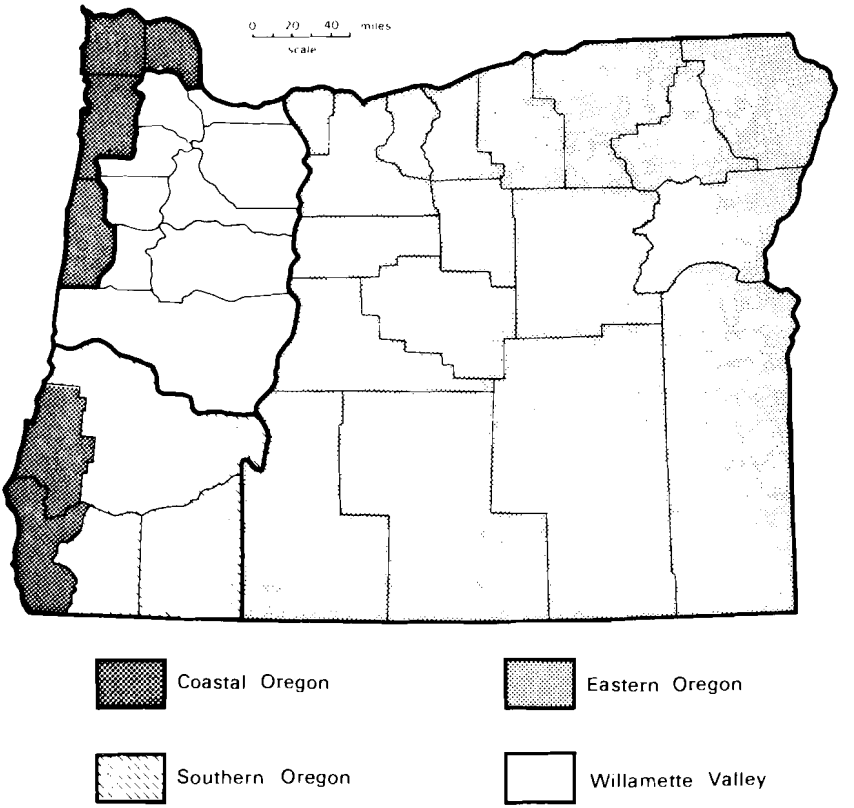
21. 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6, at 2.

22. *Id.* at 1.

23. *See* Berry, *supra* note 9, at 3; R. Coughlin, *supra* note 1, at 85-86.

24. R. MASON, D. FAULKENBERRY & A. SEIDLER, THE QUALITY OF LIFE AS OREGONIANS SEE IT 20 (1975).

Figure 1. The Four Regions of the State of Oregon



nomic and environmental criteria. The resulting scheme (as seen in Figure 1) subdivides Oregon into four regions: Willamette Valley, southern Oregon, coastal Oregon, and eastern Oregon.

The nine counties of the Willamette Valley represent the population and economic core of the state.[25] Encompassing only 13.6 percent of the total land area of Oregon,[26] the region contains 67 percent of the population and all of the largest urban centers.[27] Despite extensive urban and suburban development, agriculture and forestry remain major economic activities in the region.[28] In 1977, for ex-

25. *Id.*
26. OREGON SECRETARY OF STATE, OREGON BLUE BOOK 1979-1980 at 180-81 (1979) [hereinafter cited as BLUE BOOK].
27. *Id.*
28. R. Mason, *supra* note 24, at 21.

ample, the ten leading counties in the state in terms of farm marketing included six Willamette Valley counties: Marion, Linn, Clackamas, Washington, Yamhill, and Lane.[29]

Table 1 shows that the population in the Willamette Valley increased by 6.4 percent from 1974 to 1978. All areas in the valley experienced population growth except the central Portland metropolitan region (Multnomah County). While the regional rate of increase was below the state mean, the absolute increase in population was the highest in Oregon. Table 1 also reveals that the approximately 100,000 new residents in the region represent 55.9 percent of the total state growth for the period. Large population increases and the existing urban infrastructure mean pressure on existing agricultural land resources was stronger in the Willamette Valley than in any other region of the state. This interpretation of the data is supported by the findings of earlier research.[30]

In spite of the intense pressure on agricultural land, the census data show only a slight decrease in farm acreage (14,405 acres or .007 percent).[31] As expected, the greatest shift of land from agriculture was in counties experiencing the largest growth. Exceptions to this pattern were Benton, Lane, and Marion counties. In Benton County, rural subdivisions approved prior to 1974 took large amounts of woodland and pasture out of use,[32] while in Lane and Marion counties significant quantities of land were shifted into agriculture, despite increasing population and economic growth.

This finding suggests diminution of a widespread phenomena associated with "urban shadow"[33] effects–the impermanance syndrome.[34] Expanding urban areas usually threaten nearby agriculture and contribute to feelings of uncertainty about the future of farming. These attitudes create declining levels of capital investment,[35] less intensive agricultural activity,[36] and increased part-time farming.[37]

29. BLUE BOOK, *supra* note 26, at 186.

30. *See* Berry, *supra* note 9, at 3; *see generally* W. BRYANT, *supra* note 2, at 4; G. PETERSON & H. YAMPOLSKY, URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE PROTECTION OF METROPOLITAN FARMLAND 12-13 (1975); L. RUSSWURM, THE SURROUNDINGS OF OUR CITIES (1977); R. SHUMWAY, URBAN EXPANSION ON AGRICULTURAL LAND IN CALIFORNIA 18-21 (1971).

31. *See* 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6.

32. Interview with Richard M. Highsmith, Jr., Oregon State University (Sept. 29, 1980).

33. Hind-Smith, *The Impact of Urban Growth on Agricultural Land: A Pilot Study* in RESOURCES FOR TOMORROW–SUPPLEMENTARY VOLUME, 158 (1961).

34. Berry, *supra* note 9, at 3.

35. Williamson, *supra* note 18, at 17-18.

36. Berry, *The Sensitivity of Dairying to Urbanization: A Study of Northeastern Illinois*, 31 PROF. GEOG. 170 (1979); H. CONKLIN & R. DYMZA, MAINTAINING VIABLE AGRICULTURE IN AREAS OF URBAN EXPANSION 35 (1972).

37. J. MAGE, PART-TIME FARMING IN SOUTHERN ONTARIO WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO WATERLOO COUNTY (1974); L. RUSSWURM, *supra* note 33, at 49.

As a result, agricultural viability in the area is jeopardized, and conversion of agricultural land to nonagricultural uses is accelerated.

The change in agricultural acreage in Marion and Lane counties, both of which contain large urban centers and leading agricultural areas,[38] as well as in Multnomah County, suggests a reversal in the impermanance syndrome. Lands which were previously idle or vacant are being shifted or returned to agricultural use. Moreover, the number of agricultural operations has increased in all three counties.[39] These figures show increasing confidence in the future of agriculture, with more land under cultivation, new farming operations being formed, and greater capital investments.[40] Consequently, productive farming appears more secure.

While it would be unwise to credit Oregon's agricultural land policy alone for this revitalization, it is reasonable to infer that the protection the policy provides farmers has eliminated many pernicious impacts of urban development on the agricultural economy. As a result, agricultural decisionmaking is no longer as affected by external urban-related variables.

While agricultural land use was nearly unchanged in the Willamette Valley, the situation in southern Oregon was far from stable. Total land in farms dropped by 170,552 acres (or 16.8 percent) in Douglas, Jackson, and Josephine counties.[41] Comprising almost ten percent of the land area of the state and 10.8 percent of the population, this region has been experiencing extensive in-migration over the past 15 years.[42] Many young Oregonians complain that this section of the state has been "californicated" by the heavy influx of migrants from California.[43]

A review of Table 1 shows that all three counties in southern Oregon registered a record decline in agricultural acreage. However, the decrease in acreage was most severe in Jackson County, where almost 29 percent of the agricultural land became idle. A more detailed review of the Jackson and other county data reveals that practically all of the decline resulted from a precipitous drop in pasture and range-

38. BLUE BOOK, *supra* note 26, at 186.

39. *See generally* 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6.

40. *Id.*

41. *Id.*

42. A. HOLDEN & B. SHEPARD, MIGRATION AND OREGON–1970: PATTERNS AND IMPLICATIONS 37 (1975); BLUE BOOK, *supra* note 26, at 180.

43. The "californication" of Oregon (the transformation of the Oregon landscape to resemble Southern California) is a major concern to Oregonians if bumper stickers, letters to editors, and graffiti are a reflection of the public consciousness. One might hypothesize that many Oregonians are concerned that they are about to be overwhelmed by hordes of disgruntled Californians bringing with them the relics of their culture–freeways, suburbia, and right-wing politics.

land.[44] Acreage in higher value cropland and irrigated lands either remained constant or increased during the study period.[45]

Discussion with knowledgeable observers in the region indicates that the vast majority of agricultural conversion results from low density rural subdivision activity.[46] In sections around Medford, Ashland, and the Rogue River Valley, ranchette developments (large minimum lot sizes) have consumed considerable farmland. The transfer of agricultural land to low density uses would account for the concentration of losses in the lowest value agricultural land (such as pasture, ranchland, and woodlands). Local opinion places the blame for this pattern of development on the California influence.

Coastal Oregon includes the six entirely coastal or riverine counties along the western edge of the state. Covering 7.1 percent of the state, it is home for 7.8 percent of the state's population.[47] With a landscape dominated by the coast range mountains, level, fertile land for agricultural use has always been at a premium.[48] The region's economy centers on forest products and commercial fishing industries, with agriculture playing a secondary role.[49]

Between 1974 and 1978, the population in this region increased by 6.4 percent, lagging behind the statewide mean.[50] During the same years, the amount of agricultural land dropped by only 2.1 percent (see Table 1). Individually, several counties reported gains, while the remaining areas reported slightly larger decreases in acreage. Regionally, the rate of decline in agricultural land was reduced by 8.4 percent (or 41,500 acres) from the preceeding census period.[51] Even more important, this reduction in farmland losses occurred during a period when population growth was higher.[52]

Therefore, it appears agricultural interests are successfully competing with development interests for buildable land that is level and well-drained in the rugged terrain of coastal Oregon. The aggregate impact of Oregon's agricultural protection program and other *Statewide Planning Goals and Guidelines*[53] has significantly reduced the economic advantage of higher value urban development.[54]

44. *See* 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6.
45. *See* 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6.
46. Interview with John W. Mairs, Southern Oregon College (October 6, 1980).
47. *See generally* BLUE BOOK, *supra* note 26.
48. D. AAMODT, *supra* note 11, at 26-30.
49. *See generally* BLUE BOOK, *supra* note 26.
50. CENSUS ESTIMATES 1973 AND 1974, *supra* note 8, at 3; CENSUS ESTIMATES 1977 AND 1978, *supra* note 15, at 3.
51. 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6, at 1.
52. *See generally* 1970 CENSUS, *supra* note 15.
53. *See* OR. REV. STAT. § § 197.005-.430 (Repl. 1979).
54. The basic land use planning policies and standards for the Oregon coastal zone are framed by Senate Bill 100. There are 19 Statewide Planning Goals, with Goals 17 through

The largest subregion of the state, eastern Oregon, encompasses 69 percent of the total land area, but only 13.6 percent of the population.[55] Aridity is a major constraint to both large population concentrations and intensive agricultural practices.[56] By virtue of its size, eastern Oregon is the most important agricultural area in Oregon. In 1978, the market value of products sold was $668,354,000.[57] Growth of the agricultural economy in eastern Oregon has been rapid in recent years, with much of the expansion tied to advances in agricultural technology (sophisticated irrigation engineering in particular) which has facilitated expansion into formerly marginal agricultural areas.[58] Regionally, agricultural acreage dropped slightly between 1974 and 1978. From the data presented in Table 1, however, it is apparent that the structure of agriculture was not static. Several counties recorded sharp declines in agricultural acreage, but these were offset by other counties experiencing large increases in agricultural land use. Structurally, most of the decreases came at the expense of pasture and rangeland uses.[59] In contrast, cropland and irrigated agricultural land uses were expanded significantly.[60] For example, Wallowa County, situated in extreme northeastern Oregon, registered a slight drop in land in farms between 1974 and 1978.[61] Conversely, the amount of cropland in the county increased by 26.8 percent, and the amount of irrigated agricultural acreage increased by 27.7 percent.[62] However, the net effect of losses in pasture, rangeland, and woodland was large enough to produce an aggregate decline in agricultural acreage.

Population growth in eastern Oregon during the same time was substantial: 12.7 percent during the four year period. This expansion rate was the highest in Oregon and outstripped the preceeding five years' growth rate by over 50 percent.[63] Clearly, eastern Oregon is a model for the "rural renaissance" concept—the demographic revival of nonmetropolitan rural areas in the 1970-1977 period.[64]

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19 specifically addressing coastal zone management. For a discussion of their impact, see: Da Prato, *Land use still in vortex of local-state control storm*, The Portland Oregonian, Jan. 23, 1977, at C-1, col. 1-6.

55. *See generally* BLUE BOOK, *supra* note 26.

56. *Id.*

57. *See generally* 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6.

58. *See* BLUE BOOK, *supra* note 26, at 186.

59. *See generally* 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6.

60. *Id.*

61. *Id.*

62. *Id.*

63. *See generally* CENSUS ESTIMATES 1973 AND 1974, *supra* note 8; CENSUS ESTIMATES 1977 AND 1978, *supra* note 15.

64. A. SOFRANKO & J. WILLIAMS, REBIRTH OF RURAL AMERICA: RURAL MIGRATION IN THE MIDWEST 2-4 (1980).

Nevertheless, a close review of Table 1 indicates that most of the population increase in the region is concentrated in a few areas. The five counties experiencing greatest absolute growth (Deschutes, Umatilla, Klamath, Morrow, and Malheur) account for 78 percent of the total expansion, while the ten slowest growing counties accounted for slightly more than ten percent of the growth.[65] Somewhat surprisingly, the pattern of agricultural land use in eastern Oregon does not mirror these population dynamics. Agriculture does not suffer in rapidly growing areas. Rather, the data suggest that agricultural activities are expanding and intensifying at a more rapid pace in the higher growth counties than the rest of the region.[66]

It would seem that agricultural land uses are not being displaced by incipient urbanization. Instead, the simultaneous expansion of agricultural and urban development is being accomplished by displacing formerly nonproductive idle land. Given the large reserve of vacant land and agricultural protection policies, perhaps there is little incentive to supplant farm uses with urban development.

Consider the example of Deschutes County, a high amenity area situated on the eastern edge of the Cascade Mountains. The population of Deschutes, one of the fastest growing counties in the state, has increased by some 70 percent during the past decade.[67] Since implementation of Oregon's agricultural protection policies, the county's population has continued to surge, yet the amount and intensity of agriculture also has been increasing.[68] While acreage was declining before the new policy, most agricultural uses are now gaining in areal coverage.[69] The number of farm operators is also rising.[70]

Such positive findings are particularly satisfying in light of the checkered history of Oregon's agricultural protection program in Deschutes County. A critical element of the program is exclusive agricultural zoning (EFU), which mandates protection of valuable farmland and idle acreage having a high agricultural potential.[71] This is a statewide requirement of the Oregon strategy. Nevertheless, in Deschutes County, threats to local government were necessary to force adoption of EFU zoning.[72] Despite state government intrusion into

65. *See generally* CENSUS ESTIMATES 1973 AND 1974, *supra* note 8; CENSUS ESTIMATES 1973 AND 1974, *supra* note 15.

66. *See generally* 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6.

67. 1970 CENSUS, *supra* note 15; CENSUS ESTIMATES 1977 AND 1978, *supra* note 15, at 3.

68. 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6, at 1.

69. 1969 CENSUS, *supra* note 14; 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6, at 1.

70. *See* 1969 CENSUS, *supra* note 14 and 1978 CENSUS, *supra* note 6, at 1.

71. OREGON LAND CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, STATEWIDE PLANNING GOALS AND GUIDELINES 4 (1975).

72. The Portland Oregonian, Nov. 27, 1978, at A-15, col. 4.

local zoning policies, popular support for Oregon's comprehensive planning program remained high.[73] Consequently, Deschutes County shows elements of complete policy success, from both a land use perspective and a political or public support perspective.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

While the data and events surrounding Deschutes County reflect local circumstances, and therefore are not directly transferable, regionally or statewide, they are valuable since they reflect a general statewide pattern. In every region except southern Oregon, agricultural land use is exhibiting greater resistance to urbanization and suburban development. Direct and indirect impacts of incompatible land uses which ultimately lead to the idling or transfer of agricultural land appear to be lessening. Ironically, this conversion reduction was occurring during a period when Oregon was sustaining dramatic population and economic growth,[74] a period in which one would anticipate the effects of urbanization and rural development to be most severe.

Even more important, the rate of decline in agricultural acreage in metropolitan areas and rapidly urbanizing counties has slackened. These environments characteristically experience the most intense urban pressure and undergo sweeping transformation, yet the latest Oregon data indicate increasing stability in these areas. Rapid growth has not produced rampant land conversion. Agricultural land is given up to urbanization, but leapfrog development is no longer permitted and infilling is encouraged.[75] As a result, inefficiencies are reduced and, in several cases, idle lands are actually brought into production.

In comparison with agricultural land planning programs in other areas of the United States, Oregon's is more restrictive. The shift of local land use planning powers away from municipal and county governments toward state-dictated planning and oversight powers broke with tradition.[76] Moreover, the variety of incentives and disincentives within the state land use planning program to protect valued agricultural resources is unorthodox.[77] The logic, however, is clear and precise. A strategy for managing agricultural resources cannot rely on incremental, short term financial incentives (such as differential tax assessments), but must reduce or eliminate financial and nuisance ex-

73. *Id.*

74. CENSUS ESTIMATES 1973 AND 1974, *supra* note 8, at 3; CENSUS ESTIMATES 1977 AND 1978, *supra* note 15, at 3.

75. OREGON LAND CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, *supra* note 71, at 8.

76. Da Prato, *supra* note 54.

77. Furuseth, *supra* note 4, at 610-14.

ternalities associated with more intensive land uses. The Oregon program, therefore, seeks to foster continued farming and ranching on land which remains economically viable for agriculture.

The results of the Oregon experiment continue to inspire optimism. At a time when other statewide farmland protection policies have been described as failures,[78] recent land use data indicate that Oregon has developed an environmental public policy which other states should consider. A recent declaration by the prestigious American Assembly that Oregon's agricultural land use planning program should be adopted as a nationwide model may be prophetic.[79]

78. U.S. Department of Agriculture Committee on Land Use, *Conference on "The Farm And The City,"* 27 LAND USE NOTES 2 (1980).

79. *Id.*