

## Land Conservation and Land Trusts—The New Eastern Oregon Frontier — by *Chris Perry, Oregon Rural Action Director*

In 1973, former governor Tom McCall made his now famous speech to the Oregon Legislature, in which he described "sagebrush subdivisions, coastal 'condomania,' fractured forestlands and the ravenous rampage of suburbia in the Willamette Valley." It was a speech that set off a decade of new environmental protections, including a statewide land-use policy, restrictions on development, and standards for planning and zoning in all cities and counties. Senate Bill 100 was enacted in 1973, the most comprehensive national or statewide land use legislation ever drafted, before or since.

Oregon, through its strong land use planning laws, has remained one of the most beautiful places in America. It would be a tragedy to destroy it now. In spite of having the nation's best land use planning laws, the loss of land has been significant and is being developed at a rapid rate as the following figures represent. According to the most recent National Resources Inventory, in just 15 years (1985 to 2000) Oregon experienced significant changes in land use:

### Calendar

**Baker County Grassroots Alliance** meets every 2nd Monday. Next meeting is July 9th at 7pm. Please call the ORA office for location.

The **Blue Mountain Chapter** is meeting at noon in the basement of Mamacitas restaurant the 1st Wednesday of each month. Call for issue team meeting schedules.

The **Snake River Chapter** meets every 3rd Thursday in Ontario. Next meeting is July 19th at noon. Lunch is provided.

**First Annual Blue Mountain Chapter BBQ**—July 14th on End Creek—we'll send an e-mail with directions.  
**Save the date!**

See our new calendar on the website—[www.oraction.org](http://www.oraction.org)

- The amount of urbanized land in Oregon nearly doubled (up 44%)
- 289,800 acres were converted from rural lands to urban lands
- 92,000 acres of natural resource lands were converted to urban use
- The annual rate of conversion from rural to urban status jumped by 21%

The development pressure on Oregon's ranchlands, farmlands and forestlands is likely to increase as the state's population continues to grow. Between 1990 and 2005, approximately 160,000 people moved to Oregon's rural, unincorporated areas and 69,000 acres of once productive farm and ranch land east of the Cascades have gone toward high-end real estate development. In sparsely developed areas, even a few new residents can have a significant impact on habitat and also on ranching, farming and forestry operations, all of which require large expanses of contiguous acreage.

These events have been further compounded by the threats imposed by Ballot Measure 37 that was passed in 2004. As of March 2007, nearly 7,000 Measure 37 claims totaling over 370,000 acres have been filed claiming that they were never compensated for having their land re-zoned to farm or forest use in the 1970s.

One item that is rarely discussed is the fact that Senate Bill 100 resulted in Property Tax Reduction Compensation totaling \$4.8 billion from 1974 to 2004. This 1973 Tax Reduction Mandate compensated landowners in Exclusive Farm and Forest Use Zones through discounted property tax rates of between 50% to 90% less than Real Market Value (American Land Institute Dec 2005).

With land prices raging upwards like a crown fire to a ridge top, private timber companies in Oregon and across the nation have given in to the temptation to sell or develop their lands. More than 65% of America's 68 million acres of private timberland has changed hands since 1997. Much of that land is now held by Timber Investment Management Organizations (TIMOs) that seek to maximize their profits by selling off high-end home site development potential to the highest bidder. The fate of these lands will become the biggest shaper of Oregon's landscape as the private forests that now cover nearly 23% of Oregon's land move toward high-end real estate development resulting in loss of historical public access and open spaces and the further fracturing of wildlife habitat and corridors.

During the last five years in the state of Montana, over 160,000 acres of private timberlands have been developed into home

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sites and destination resorts as the result of TIMO acquisitions of forestlands. The situation would be equally as dire in Oregon if not for our pre-existing statewide land use regulations. In our region of the state, Forest Capital Partners recently purchased over 240,000 acres (all of Boise Cascade Corporation's former local forestlands) of which approximately 15,000 acres have already been sold, auctioned off or transferred to its property liquidation arm for high-end real estate development.

One of my primary goals in becoming director of Oregon Rural Action was to assist in the formation of a locally-based land trust that would help us meet our goal of preserving open spaces. On March 30, 2007 we incorporated the Eagle Cap Land Trust, Oregon's newest Land Trust organization serving the Blue Mountain region.

America's first Land Trust was formed in 1973 in New Hampshire and Land Trusts spread quickly throughout the Northeastern states. In 1978, people came together in Jackson and Josephine counties to create Oregon's first land trust, the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy (SOLC). By 2005, there were over 20 active land trusts operating in Oregon. The increasing support for Oregon's land trust movement has been prompted, in large part, by continuing loss of the state's remaining green spaces.

There are over 1,500 land trusts in the U.S., serving every state in the nation. But many people have never heard about these organizations or their vital role in conserving open lands. These nonprofit organizations tend to be community-based and are not a part of government. This independent, grassroots structure allows trusts to act as nonpartisan negotiators, helping landowners and communities to protect lands (often valuable natural habitats) from the pressures of development. In addition, trusts can provide case-by-case solutions that respect the needs and wishes of private landowners.

Land trusts can offer innovative non-regulatory solutions to help settle land-use conflicts. Trusts realize that self-interest and market forces are often the driving forces behind a landowner's decisions. The approach of land trusts is not designed to apply pressure, but to guide landowners into considering conservation for their own benefit, as well as for the public good.

Through the Eagle Cap Land Trust, we are actively working on a conservation solution for the 3,600-acre Mt. Emily parcel to the north of the City of La Grande. We are also negotiating with several Union and Baker County landowners for significant conservation acquisitions and conservation easements to be held by the Eagle Cap Land Trust. We will be proactive in pursuing as many land conservation acquisitions and interests as possible in our effort to permanently remove as much land from development potential as possible to help preserve the rural character and open spaces within our region.

One of many conservation options that we will be pursuing are Working Forest Conservation acquisitions or easements for both ecological and local economic benefits thru long-term sustainable timber harvesting, thereby preserving intact private forestland holdings, negating inappropriate and unsustainable development, and helping to maintain a certain level of local timber related living-wage jobs through minimal impact long-term sustainable timber harvesting, forest restoration, and responsible land use stewardship practices.

Our region has long been known for uninterrupted views and wide-open spaces. As in many parts of rural Oregon, the demand for land subdivision and development of "ranchettes" is reducing the amount of land available for agriculture and sustainable forestland practices. Nationwide and statewide, Land Trusts have proven to be a very effective tool in the preservation of open space and productive agricultural and forest lands.

Although there are groups on both ends of the spectrum, it's important to remember that there is no single group that has all the answers to land conservation and protection. There are many industrial leaders who advocate complete conservation of undisturbed ecosystems, permanently protecting resources from development. There are also many environmentalists who realize that society has legitimate needs for timber and other resources. While land trusts are not the only avenue for land protection or restoration, trusts do fill a very important niche in the conservation movement. Above all, trusts have the flexibility to build consensus among stakeholders, helping to bridge the chasm between developers and environmentalists.

Each land trust agreement is unique. By offering a wide variety of conservation transfer and conservation easement strategies, the Eagle Cap Land Trust can offer local landowners a choice of tools for achieving their desired goals while at the same time conserving land for future generations to enjoy and benefit from.

## Oregon Rural Action

The Furrow is published four times each year by Oregon Rural Action. Oregon Rural Action supports and encourages community organizing around locally identified issues. Our members work together to promote healthy and sustainable rural communities and to ensure that all people have a voice in the decisions, policies, and systems that affect their lives.

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Blue Mountain Chapter  
Snake River Chapter

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Contact us at 541-975-2411

### Judge Rules to Require Environmental Impact Statement for "Roundup Ready" Alfalfa

On May 3, 2007, a Federal judge made a final ruling that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) 2005 approval of **Monsanto's** genetically modified (GM) "Roundup Ready" alfalfa was illegal. The judge called on USDA to ban any further planting of the GM seed until it conducts a complete Environmental Impact Study on the GM crop.

In the decision, Judge Charles Breyer in the Federal Northern District of California affirmed his preliminary ruling that the crop could harm the environment and contaminate natural alfalfa. Plaintiffs in this lawsuit against **USDA** include farmers organized and supported by the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC), Dakota Resource Council (DRC), and the Center for Food Safety. Today's ruling also requires **Forage Genetics** to provide the locations of all existing Roundup Ready alfalfa plots to USDA within 30 days. The judge ordered USDA to make the location of these plots "publicly available as soon as practicable" so that growers of organic and conventional alfalfa "can test their own crops to determine if there has been contamination."

"The judge's order to make public the location of Roundup Ready alfalfa fields is a critical part of the decision," said Blaine Schmaltz, an organic alfalfa seed producer from Rugby, North Dakota, and spokesperson for DRC and WORC. "It allows GM-free and organic producers like me to make sound planting decisions."

"This permanent halt to the planting of this risky crop is a great victory for the environment," said Will Rostov, a Senior Attorney for Center for Food Safety. "Roundup Ready alfalfa poses threats to farmers, to our export markets, and to the environment. We expect the USDA to abide by the law and ensure that American farmers are protected from genetic contamination."

The permanent injunction ordered by Judge Breyer follows his ruling last month finding that USDA violated national environmental laws by approving GM alfalfa without a full Environmental Impact Statement. Monsanto and Forage Genetics, the developers of the GM alfalfa seed, failed to convince the Judge that their interests outweighed the public interest in food safety, freedom to farm natural crops, and environmental protection. In fact, Judge Breyer specifically noted that Monsanto's fear of lost sales "does not outweigh the potential irreparable damage to the environment".

### Maine Passes Law Requiring Economic Impact Studies on Big-Box Projects

The Maine legislature passed a bill on June 18, 2007 that requires cities and towns to evaluate the economic effects of large-scale retail development and to approve only those projects that will not have an adverse impact on jobs, local businesses, and municipal finances. The legislation is the first of its kind in the nation.

In the debate leading up to the vote, Senator John Nutting argued that towns needed to more closely examine the effects of large stores on the economy. Referencing research in Maine and other states, Nutting noted that locally owned businesses generate a bigger "economic multiplier" by keeping a much larger share of their revenue in the state's economy.

Senator Dana Dow, one of three Republican Senators who voted in favor of the bill, asked "Do we want to change every rural corner into a shopping area?" He argued that the bill would give communities a tool to protect "the Maine way of life." He noted that big-box stores add little to the state's economy and instead displace existing businesses and jobs. "I don't think it's good economics," he said.

Attempts to characterize the bill as "anti-business" and millions spent by **Wal-Mart** and the **Maine Real Estate and Development Association** to fight the legislation largely failed as more than 200 small business owners from across the state strongly endorsed the measure in letters to lawmakers. Their support was referenced several times during the legislative debate. Supporters contended that the Informed Growth Act would encourage small businesses to invest and develop in Maine.

The campaign to enact the bill was led by the Maine Fair Trade Campaign, the Institute for Local Self-Reliance's New Rules Project, the Maine chapter of the Sierra Club, and Our Town Damariscotta, a citizen group that stopped a **Wal-Mart** project last year. Numerous other small business, labor, environmental, and community groups provided crucial support and engaged the help of their members. Thousands of people contacted their representatives. Supportive editorials and op-eds appeared in newspapers around the state.

The Informed Growth Act stipulates that cities conduct an economic impact analysis for proposed stores larger than 50,000 square feet (roughly half the size of a typical Target or Home Depot and a quarter of the size of a Super Wal-Mart). The analysis is performed by an independent consultant chosen by the town, but paid for by a fee charged to the developer. It evaluates the effects of the proposed store on existing businesses, jobs, wages, vacancy rates, the cost of municipal services, and the volume of "sales revenue retained and reinvested" in the community.

### *Support Local Businesses!*

Where people, not corporations, make the decisions. We all have the power to make a difference. By supporting local businesses, you can triple the impact your dollar has on the local economy.

## Member Spotlight

## Anne Spurrier

Our first installment of what will become a quarterly member spotlight is bittersweet as our dear friend and active community member, Anne Spurrier, will be re-locating to New Orleans this summer with her partner Aaron McNamee. All of us here at Oregon Rural Action wish Anne the best in her next life adventure and our community is better off for having been on the receiving end of much goodwill from this omnipresent community volunteer.

**Thank you, Anne!**

### We will miss your effort and presence in La Grande.

Anne came to La Grande in 2002 as a student from Kalamazoo College in Michigan. Her educational focus at EOU has been Liberal Studies with an emphasis on History, Art, Gender Studies, and Spanish. She plans to continue her education with an emphasis on helping individuals with autism enhance their socialization skills. Anne has a passion for social justice, grassroots community organizing, and helping communities address their needs. Some of us are still not entirely convinced that Anne doesn't have a twin sister as it seems that she was volunteering at almost every event, function, or work effort in town from helping develop the La Grande Community Garden, coordinating multiple events on campus, filling in as the Farmers' Market Manager, assisting with local small businesses, and helping out at Oregon Rural Action events – just to name a few!

Anne is currently an AmeriCorps Volunteer with the Eastern Oregon University Cornerstone Program. Once in New Orleans, Anne

will continue to assist the non-profit sector and help with the rebuilding effort of the many diverse communities affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Anne will be remembered for her positive attitude and kind heart and for whipping up a pretty mean plate of spaghetti as many of us can attest to from our holiday fundraiser. We know that New Orleans will be a step closer to recovery with Anne's involvement.



Do you have something to say to the Oregon Rural Action membership?

Call the office and ask about submitting an article for the next newsletter!



## Farmers' Market Schedules:

### Baker City (Saturdays)

Geiser-Pollman Park  
10am to noon (June-September)

### Enterprise (Thursdays)

In front of the Courthouse on Main Street  
4pm to 7pm (June-September)

### Halfway (Saturdays)

Downtown Halfway  
8am to 11am (June-September)

### Joseph (Saturdays)

In front of To Zion at Main and Joseph Street  
9am to 1pm (June-October)

### La Grande (Saturdays)

Max Square on corner of 4th and Adams  
9am to noon (May-October)

### La Grande (Tuesdays)

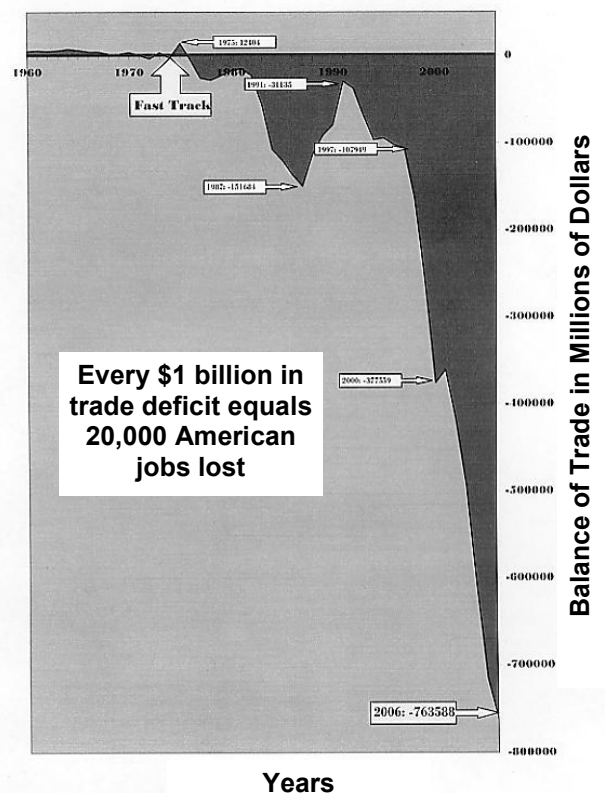
Max Square on corner of 4th and Adams  
4pm to 6pm (July and August)

### Pendleton (Fridays)

On Main between Emigrant and Frazer  
4pm to dusk (May-October)

## US Trade Policy Reality Check

### US Balance of Trade (1960-2006)



## Current Issues

### Snake River Chapter

On May 17, 2007, the Snake River Chapter held a Community Forum on Hunger Issues with a focus on the local food stamp program. As a result of our efforts in addressing staff and policy issues within the Ontario Department of Human Services, members of the Snake River Chapter felt compelled to inform the community of the changes taking place within the local Food Stamps Program. Malheur County has the highest poverty rate in the State of Oregon in which one in two children live with a family below poverty level. Malheur County has one of the worst participation rates of those eligible for food stamp assistance receiving this vital aid. Part of the educational process of this community forum was to encourage people who were mistreated or unfairly denied in the past to reconsider seeking food stamp assistance if they still qualify and need this help to make ends meet. Members and local leaders will be monitoring the proposed changes taking place to make sure the food security needs of the community are being met. Certain myths have been dispelled about who in our communities actually receive food stamp benefits. Some key figures regarding food stamp recipients are as follows:

- 30% working full-time
- 21% working part-time
- 25% disabled
- 16% retired/elderly (over 65 years old)

### Energy Team

On May 23, 2007, the State of Oregon House of Representatives passed Senate Bill No. 838, the Oregon Renewable Energy Standard (RES), which requires that 25% of all the state's electricity must come from non-hydro renewable energy resources by 2025. As of today, only 1.2% of the state's electricity comes from non-hydro renewable energy sources and nearly 60% comes from coal and natural gas fired power plants that emit massive amounts of greenhouse gases each day.

We have now become the 24th state to adopt an RES. Not only that, we now have in place the most stringent and comprehensive renewable energy standards and requirements in the nation along with taking a huge step forward in addressing the biggest environmental concern on the planet - global warming.

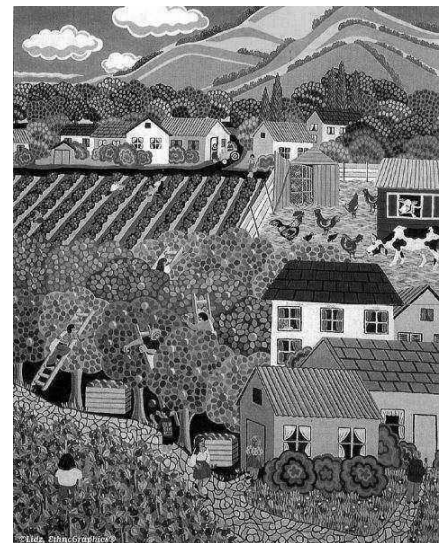
A special thank you to those who made the 12-hour round-trip journey to Salem to testify on behalf of this most important legislation and also to the many who wrote letters, submitted emails, and made phone calls to our elected officials. In spite of intense pressure from the Oregon Electric Cooperative Association lobby, which aggressively campaigned against this bill, enough of our local Eastern Oregon elected officials voted in favor of it as it cleared the house by a whopping 41-19 margin. Less than two weeks prior to passage, many of those yes votes were on record as saying they were going to vote no.

A recent study conducted by the Union of Concerned Scientists forecasts that the majority of rural Eastern Oregon counties will be able to replace the entirety of the lost revenue from the demise of the Federal Timber Receipts Payment program through the development of renewable energy resources. For example, Union County will receive \$10 million over the next 20 years from the first phase alone of the Horizon Wind Power Projects being developed along the border of Union and Baker counties.

The Oregon Electric Cooperative Association lobby still managed to broker an amendment to the legislation to create a lesser requirement for the state's smaller electric cooperatives. Those cooperatives who produce or purchase less than 1.5% (including Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative) of the total statewide electrical power will only have to meet a standard of 5% renewable energy by 2025; and those cooperatives who produce or purchase between 1.5% and 3% (including Umatilla Electric Cooperative) of the total statewide electrical power will have to meet a standard of 10% renewable energy by 2025.

### Healthy School Lunch Committee

Blue Mountain Chapter members are working on an educational program for elementary students. We are developing a nutrition and food "literacy" program to teach students about the where our food comes from, what foods grow in our region, what foods are healthy, and why it is important for our bodies to eat healthy foods—including local food snacks and fun projects. The curriculum will be presented to classes by parent volunteers beginning next school year. If you are interested in working with us, please call Julie at the Oregon Rural Action office 975-2411.



**2007 Northeast Oregon Food & Farm Directory**

*Coming soon!*

**Your Voice is Needed—Participate in the Oregon Legislative Process!**

**With your help, we are making a difference in the work we do. We appreciate the many ways you support these important efforts!**

You may have received this newsletter even though your membership is recently lapsed. Please consider renewing at this time. Your continued support is important to our efforts. Send your membership dues to Oregon Rural Action today!

**Please make checks payable to Oregon Rural Action  
Send to: PO Box 1231  
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*General donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by US tax law*

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at  
[www.oraction.org](http://www.oraction.org)**

**Sustainer's Circle**

We now offer the opportunity to support Oregon Rural Action by an automatic monthly donation from your checking account. Join the Sustainer's Circle and become part of our backbone of support!

**Contact your State legislators**

[www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr](http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr)

**Local Food:**

**House Bill 3476** *Allocates up to 7 cents per meal to help schools incorporate Oregon Agricultural products*

**House Bill 3307** *Creates a Farm to School program within the Department of Agriculture*

**House Bill 3185** *Awards mini-grants for school gardens*

The funding decision by the Joint Ways and Means Committee is the final frontier for these Farm to School bills. Let's make sure our elected officials fund these bills before breaking for the summer — only a few days left!

**Land Use:**

**House Bill 3540-C** *Measure 37 Reform*

HB 3540-C balances the right to build a limited number of homes with strong protections for our farmlands, forests and limited ground water supplies. It also prevents waivers for industrial and commercial development. The true impact of Measure 37 became apparent in the closing weeks of 2006. Oregonians' quality of life is threatened by over 7, 000 claims filed statewide on hundreds of thousands of acres for irresponsible development. Throughout our state, neighbors and the environment are being held hostage by this flawed law. Measure 37 has unleashed demands to build subdivisions on Steens Mountain and at the pristine Willowa Lake East Moraine, mine pumice at Newberry Crater National Volcanic Monument, erect billboards throughout Portland, expand a Washington County landfill and establish a rock quarry and asphalt plant on Sauvie Island along the banks of the Columbia River.

**Contact your Federal legislators**

[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) & [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

**Support Federal Bill to Restore Clean Water Act (H.R. 2421)**

HR 2421 returns crucial Clean Water Act protections to our nation's water. Two factors have caused confusion over the 35 year life of the original Clean Water Act — ambiguity in the wording of the law itself and a Supreme Court looking to narrow the regulatory reach of the federal government, in this case, ruling that the act shall only apply to navigable rivers thereby exempting nearly 90% of Oregon's waterways from the Federal Clean Water Act.


**2007 Farm Bill**

We are down to the last few months before the 2007 farm bill is passed. This is our last chance to voice our support for funding small family farms, sustainable agriculture, farmers' markets, farm to school programs, local food system development, and nutrition education.

For more information go to [www.foodsecurity.org](http://www.foodsecurity.org)

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