

OREGON USDA CERTIFIED AGRICULTURAL MEDIATION PROGRAM

About OCAMP

The Oregon USDA Certified Agricultural Mediation Program (OCAMP) is the official United States Department of Agriculture certified agricultural mediation program for Oregon. Mediation is a way to resolve disputes using an impartial person to assist parties negotiate their differences. OCAMP's services are free to the agricultural community on many issues.

Our highly trained mediators can help address common farming disputes such as loan modifications or restructuring, foreclosure, wetland determinations, chemical use, as well as other conflicts that come up between farmers, families and neighbors. Mediation can help resolve agricultural disputes efficiently, saving all parties time and money. To find out more about our program and services, please call us today at 541-386-1283 or visit us on the web at www.6rivers.org.

What Kinds of Agricultural Disputes Can Be Mediated?

- Adverse Decisions from USDA agencies
- Compliance Issues with USDA Farm and Conservation Programs
- Farm and Rural Development Loans
- Farm Credit/Debt Issues
- Wetlands Determinations
- Crop Insurance
- Pesticide, Land Leasing, and Grazing Issues
- Conflicting Agricultural Practices
- Organic Certification Disputes
- Farm Transitions and Succession
- Farm Labor Disputes
- Family or Neighbor Disputes
- Any dispute involving a producer or USDA agency
- Parties may initiate mediation as prevention, prior to an adverse decision

How Much Does Mediation Cost?

OCAMP provides free mediation services to the agricultural community in Oregon on issues involving a USDA agency. For other agricultural issues, OCAMP will provide the first four hours of mediation services free of charge. At that point, a rate of \$175/session will be charged to each party for additional sessions. A sliding scale can be applied as appropriate.

Steps in requesting mediation through OCAMP

1. Request mediation in one of three ways:
Mail: Oregon Certified Agricultural Mediation Program
PO Box 1594
Hood River, OR 97031
Email: info@6rivers.org
Phone: 541-386-1283
2. OCAMP staff will confirm that all parties are willing to participate in the mediation.
3. OCAMP mediators will conduct one-on-one confidential interviews with each party to learn background information about the dispute. Discussion of new information and potential solutions may occur throughout the mediation process.
4. OCAMP will assign mediator(s) from the OCAMP Agricultural Mediation Roster or internal staff based on subject matter expertise, geography, and availability.
5. The mediator will contact the parties to arrange a date, time and location for the mediation session.
6. Mediation sessions occur throughout Oregon, virtually, or telephonically. Format and location are determined collaboratively based on the individuals and agencies involved.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: To request mediation, what do I do first?

A: To request mediation, contact Oregon's USDA Certified Agricultural Mediation Program (OCAMP) at 541-386-1283. You can also email your questions or request to mediate: info@6rivers.org. OCAMP staff will ask you for a short letter or email stating the nature of the conflict, along with the name and contact information for the other party. If mediation is being requested based on an adverse decision by one of the USDA Agencies (NRCS, FSA, Rural Development, Rural Housing, Risk Management or Federal Forest Service), the request must be made within a certain time frame. This information is outlined in the adverse determination letter you receive from USDA. If you have questions about this process, you can contact your local USDA office or OCAMP.

Q: What types of conflicts can be mediated?

A: Mediation can be successful when both parties are willing to work together to find a solution to their conflict. If only party is available, OCAMP offers Conflict Coaching to individual clients. Agricultural mediation can be used for farm debt and credit disputes, grazing permit reduction or suspension, USDA program issues such as disaster payments, crop insurance, conservation contracts, pesticide issues and more. Mediators are also available to help agricultural producers with estate planning and agricultural business disputes. If you are involved in a conflict and unsure of whether you can use mediation, contact us to find out more information.

Q: Who arranges the mediation session?

A: After we receive the request for mediation, a coordinator will contact the other party(s) to determine if they are prepared to enter mediation. Once this has been established, we will send notice to all parties to set up a time and place for the mediation. Most mediation sessions can be scheduled within a couple of weeks of receiving the request.

Q: What happens during a mediation session?

A: The mediation process is simple. The mediator will start by laying out the ground rules that will help keep the process productive. The mediator will also answer any questions the parties might have. Next, both parties will be given the opportunity to talk about the situation as they see it. After everyone has had a chance to talk, the mediator will begin to identify the main issues that need to be discussed and help both parties to start exploring some options for resolving the conflict. As the options are discussed, the mediator will ensure that any solutions developed are agreed upon by both parties. Specific actions agreed upon by all will be memorialized in writing and copies will be distributed to the parties. If and when a full agreement is reached, all parties sign a binding contract.

Q: Is mediation confidential?

A. The mediation process allows the parties the opportunity to talk about specific challenges and real-world obstacles in a confidential manner. In Oregon, the only information from the mediation that is not confidential is the final agreement. By signing our "Agreement to Mediate" the parties agree not to subpoena the mediator, or any information obtained as the result of the mediation.

Q: What happens if an agreement is not reached?

A: If the parties are not able to come to a final agreement, the mediator will end the session. All parties are free to pursue other avenues to resolve the conflict.