

Frequently Asked Questions about Oregon's USDA Certified Agricultural Mediation Program- OCAMP

Q: I think I want to request mediation, what do I do first?

A: To request mediation, contact Marti Dane, the Executive Director for Oregon's USDA Certified Agricultural Mediation Program (OCAMP). Marti can be reached at 541-386-1283 or 1-888-628-4101. You can also email your questions or request to mediate to: office@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. 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 and more. Mediators are also available to help agricultural producers with estate planning conflicts, agricultural business disputes and split estate issues. If you are involved in a conflict and unsure of whether or not 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 into mediation. Once this has been established, we will send notice to all parties to set up a time and place for the mediation. Usually, the mediation is held in a centrally located, neutral location. 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.