

Dear House Land Use Committee,

Klamath Lake Land Trust respectfully requests your denial of HB 2173 for the following reasons:

- Endangered species in the region, which include the short nose and Lost River Suckers, (known as c'waam and quapdo by The Klamath Tribes), require wetland restoration to recover. Delaying wetland restoration through unnecessary process places sensitive species at further risk. The c'waam and quapdo are species of deep and cultural importance to The Klamath Tribes.
- Klamath Lake Land Trust is working with two large ranch owners on conservation projects that are highly collaborative and involve multiple community partners. Agency expertise and landowners determination to exercise property rights for stewardship are more important than creating county government oversight.
- Conditional use permits are subject to public review (not scientific standards) and can be appealed to the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals. In order to recoup costs associated with this public process, Klamath County charges at least one thousand dollars, which creates an undue financial hardship in rural communities who are trying to recover.
- Requiring private landowners to apply and pay for a conditional use permit for voluntary restoration is an unnecessary burden on landowners working to provide public benefits through their stewardship. Also, landowner property rights are diminished.
- County government officials are elected, and do not always have proper qualifications to determine wetland restoration priorities, whereas national, state and local level agencies have expertise, qualifications, and scientific standards to make educated decisions. County government could make decisions based on ideological perspectives.
- The last thing Klamath County and Lake County need is another layer of government, when voluntary efforts are preserving farmland and protecting water and wildlife resources. Community perspective is skeptical of another layer of government regulation.

- HB 2173 makes private landowners liable for something they didn't do and can't control. By removing this shield for private landowners, landowners are far less likely to engage in voluntary conservation projects in cooperation with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Klamath Lake Land Trust is a COLT member, who along with our local watershed councils and other partner agencies, have worked hard to engage local landowners in a series of cooperative conservation and restoration projects. Klamath Lake Land Trust is committed to the long-term health and sustainability of agriculture in Oregon; HB 2173 is not the answer.

Sincerely,

Crystal McMahon
Executive Director
Klamath Lake Land Trust