

February 26, 2013

House Committee on Land Use

RE: **House Bill 2173**

Changes status of activities conducted to create, restore or enhance wetlands on land zoned for exclusive farm use from outright permitted use to conditional use.

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Claire S. Carder. I live at 6156 SW Nevada Ct., Portland, OR,

I have worked as a wetland professional for 18 years. Wetlands are a highly valuable natural resource. Wetlands maintain and/or improve water quality, moderate flood flows and limit flood damage, recharge aquifers, help prevent in-stream erosion, and provide habitat for wildlife. The majority of Oregon's wetlands have been filled or drained, leaving urban and rural watersheds vulnerable to flooding, ever-shrinking flows in streams, precipitously dropping aquifers and the loss of in-stream fish and amphibian habitat as well as terrestrial habitat for birds, and other critters. In recent decades, many programs have been put in place to encourage restoration of wetlands in recognition of the value of these functions, and to provide incentives to farmers to restore lost habitat on their farms.

I understand that this bill would require farmers wishing to do wetland or other habitat restoration activities on their property to obtain a local Conditional Use permit for the restoration activity.

I cannot understand why this bill is being proposed. Farmers have a difficult time making their land productive enough to allow full-time farming as an economically viable activity. Farmers can supplement their farm income by turning land that is frequently marginally productive for agriculture into wetlands or wildlife habitat, which gives them another potential income stream that helps keep farms and farmers economically stable. Requiring a conditional use permit, the procurement of which is frequently very expensive and time-consuming, for this activity, on their land, doesn't make any sense to me. It will inhibit farmers from getting value from marginally productive agricultural land due to the expense of the permit process, and limit restoration of the truly beneficial functions provided by wetlands that have been lost through past farming practices.

While I am not a farmer, and do not have knowledge of how natural resource restoration or conservation activities pose a conflict with other more traditional agricultural activities, the values provided by restored wetlands are a benefit to not just wildlife, but to maintaining essential water resources. I don't believe Oregonians are going to starve because of the acres of land in restored wetlands that are not being farmed.

I urge you to reject any further consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Claire S. Carder
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Portland, OR 97219