

Members of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee

February 3, 2016

Re: SB 1517

Healthy thriving agricultural production and healthy thriving wetlands are essential to human health, environmental health and social well-being. Ensuring the vitality of both is critical to Oregon's future.

Wetlands are essential to human health and the health of our environment. They clean and recharge our water supply, provide critical fish and wildlife habitat, and protect our communities from floods. They also offer the most biologically rich and productive lands in our state.

Agricultural production is essential to Oregon's economy, social structure and the health and prosperity of Oregonians and an ever-increasing percentage of the world's citizens.

Our land use system should reflect the equal value of wetlands and agricultural production. Therefore, we oppose any change in land use statute that alters the current status of wetlands.

However, we recognize that there are times when conflicts arise between the two uses, and our regulatory system for siting and permitting wetlands within agricultural lands may not be meeting the needs of all stakeholders and communities.

We feel that the processes offered in SB 1517 will add more complexity, confusion and cost rather than promoting collaborative approaches to supporting conservation of Oregon's wetlands and agricultural economy.

This bill raises more questions than it solves. Rather than altering the status of wetlands in land use law and creating an additional layer of process, we should examine the existing processes within the Department of State Lands and determine whether changes can be made to address the concerns raised by the proponents of SB 1517.

Alternatively, if the 2016 session does not provide adequate time to review and craft a proposal to amend the DSL process, we respectfully ask that the Legislature request and fund an Oregon Solutions / Consensus process to convene the appropriate parties and produce a proposal for the 2017 session.

Thank you for your consideration and for your attention to this critical issue.

Clean Water Services

The Wetlands Conservancy

Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association

Oregon Habitat Joint Venture

Metro

Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

Network of Oregon Watershed Councils

League of Women Voters of Oregon

City of Eugene Parks and Open Space

Washington County

Oregon Recreation and Park Association

Oregon Council Trout Unlimited

Tualatin Riverkeepers

Willamette Partnership

The Nature Conservancy

Wild Salmon Center

Central Coast Land Conservancy

Oregon Association of Conservation Districts