



February 19, 2016

House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
900 Court St. NE
Room 354
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Witt and Members of the Committee,

Agriculture is a critical part of Oregon's future. Let's face it, without farms, there is no food. As a 100-year old agricultural cooperative, we have a strong interest in protecting every aspect of our ecosystem.

The dairy industry forms the backbone of the economy in Tillamook County, and it is essential that these operations continue to be able to coexist with local conservation projects while maintaining the functioning agricultural land base they need to be successful. The dairy industry in Tillamook County has a long history of collaborative conservation. We have partnered on a number of significant habitat wetlands restoration and Coho habitat improvement projects with the conservation community within the County, and plan to continue to be collaborative partners on these projects in the future. Through SB 1517-4, the County and the local agricultural community seek to have greater local input into the design of these projects to ensure that they do not have impacts on productive agricultural land while continuing to provide valuable fisheries and wildlife improvements desired in the county.

Presently, wetlands projects do not require review under Oregon land use laws for impacts to neighboring agricultural operations. As a result, some wetlands projects are not being designed with an eye toward minimizing impacts to neighboring agricultural operations, particularly in regard to hydrologic impacts from the project. SB 1517-4 seeks to provide for local involvement in these important restoration decisions. Our proposed legislation is designed to address these issues and ensure that farmers in Tillamook County can continue to be collaborative partners in conservation while maintaining their farming operations.

We hope you'll support this legislation and the economy of Tillamook County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Criteser", written over a horizontal line.

Patrick Criteser
President & CEO