

March 22, 2017

House Energy and Environment Committee

OPPOSE HB 2705, 2706, 2707

It seems fashionable now to talk about the family farm; the preservation of the family farm, the promotion of the farmers "way of life", the healthy environment that the family farm creates for communities and individuals, the work ethic of the farmers and their families and the superior quality of locally grown food.

Politicians **talk** about protection of the family farms so that they are not gobbled up by the "evil" corporate or "factory" farms. Governors talk about protecting ag lands and operations as the backbone of Oregon's economy.

I have said since the discussion on Senate bills 10 and 100, the land use laws that were designed to preserve and protect ag lands for ag uses, that the only way to do that is to allow free and open markets work unfettered by unnecessary regulations, high taxes and more taxes erroneously called "fees" that keep farmers and ranchers from being profitable. If farms and ranches are profitable the land will stay in those uses and the farmers and their families will stay on the land for generations to come.

Urban legislators fail to see that the regulation and redistribution of wealth is not the better way. A very obvious example is HB 2705, 2706, 2707.

We already pay higher property taxes for lands under irrigation, we have huge capital investment in irrigation equipment and additional cost in labor. Just getting a water right certified and/or transferred can cost thousands and take a decade or more.

HB 2705: Any recent water rights require measuring devices to be installed. They cost about \$1500 for each point of diversion and have a functional life span of roughly a year and a half until they need replaced. Under these proposed laws if a device goes bad mid season the state could fine us \$500 a day. Does this sound like a state that wants to protect the family farm??? I think not! Remember the large corporate farms absorb these extra costs because of economy of scale, a staff of accountants, lawyers and personal that takes care of these issues while the family farmer has only the family.

You say this bill will *benefit all water appropriators*. In my family's farm the investment would be \$7500 every year and a half if I didn't incur any fines. I simply cannot justify anywhere near a return on that kind of investment and if you can reap a benefit then perhaps the state should make that investment.

HB 2706: Management fee on water rights. My family's water rights date to 1899, 1913, mid fifty and sixty. I can think of no time that the state did any management of them. This is not a fee, this is a tax. A fee implies that the payer gets something in return. It appears that the only return would be more regulations that have more opportunities for the state to penalize the water appropriator, deny new appropriations or transfers and obfuscate the process, none of which would help families but rather add more burden.

If the goal were to increase late season flows in rivers and recharge of ground water the state would be thinking more about storing water this time of year when most rivers are in flood stage. Storing water in soil in early season irrigation and in impoundments are worth rewarding rather than regulating and penalizing for failing to gather data that most likely will never be analyzed or assimilated for any meaningful good.

We family farmers need less regulation not more, we need the burdensome yoke of government removed from our back if we are to survive and thrive.

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