

April 15, 2013

To: Senate Rural Communities and Economic Development Committee

Testimony for the April 16<sup>th</sup> Hearing on Senate Bill 538

Dear Senator Roblan,

I ask you and the committee to Reject Senate Bill 538 and not spend any additional time and money on this Bill which threatens farm and forest land.

As a citizen involved in land use for over 15 years, I'm aware this proposed Bill would undermine the Oregon land Use System and create a patchwork of different & confusing regulations for Resource land. As a member, chairperson & current secretary for the Lower Applegate Citizen Advisory Committee of Josephine County, I have participated in many local land use hearings and I am familiar with the state and local regulations related to Resource lands.

A Pilot Project signed by the governor last year on "redefinitions of farm and forest land" for Southern Oregon counties is currently in process. The cost to taxpayers is already at \$350,000 and although the schedule is behind, the groups are actively working on identifying any problems and issues related to Resource land. The vested interests are included in this process which is essential for any fair analysis.

The current regulations allow flexibility and as yet no significant problem to current regulations has been identified.

I am opposed to SB 538 as it is another proposed Bill to undermine and obtain Resource Land for development. Farms are already in very limited supply in Josephine County and the focus should be on retaining and protecting farm land for the future. Agriculture is the second largest industry in Oregon supporting 1 in 8 jobs statewide and is very important in Josephine County –including fruit & nut trees, dairy & cattle, wineries, crops, berries and vegetables, etc.

This Bill destroys land and does not make good economic sense.

The proposed expansion of the Grants Pass Urban Growth Boundary has already extended out into small farms and forests leaving no buffer lands. Malls and subdivisions have been created on the edges of the Urban Growth Boundary, and at the same time small rural subdivisions have sprouted up through out the county. The taking of Resource land increases costs to the taxpayer for trade offs of short term gain for the developer. This is not sustainable and leaves no farm and forest land for the future.

The current regulations Goal 2-“Land Use Planning” must have an adequate factual base for any changes in the Goals, and regulations. No factual basis has been established for a change. The current Goals & regulations address specific criteria required for Resource lands based on soils, productivity and unique qualities of the forest and farm land.

Goals 3- Agriculture Lands & OAR’s should be fully implemented –“ to preserve and maintain agricultural lands” and Goal 4- Forest Lands & OAR’s should be fully implemented “To conserve Forest Lands by maintaining the Forest Land base and to protect the state’s economy by making possible economically efficient forest practices that assure the continuous growing and harvesting of forest tree species as the **leading use** on forest land consistent with sound management of soil, air, water and fish and wildlife resources and to provide for recreational opportunities and agriculture.”

Please reject this ill conceived bill – SB 538-which would result in fewer jobs, more sprawl, more uncertainty and litigation, more taxpayer expense and Less Resource Land.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Jean Mount

3620 Helms Road

Grants Pass, OR, 97527

541-476-0519

Board member of the Lower Applegate Citizen Advisory Committee