

Senator Richard Devlin, Co-Chair, Ways & Means Committee  
Representative Peter Buckley, Co-Chair, Ways & Means Committee

Subject: House Bill 3098

Senator Devlin & Representative Buckley,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on HB 3098. This land use bill is an improvement in its approach compared to recent legislative efforts to carve out specific areas for specific uses or protections without engaging in a genuine, local decision-making process. By providing for a new use (Youth Camps) of marginal to non-productive Goal 3 lands in eastern Oregon, the legislature and DLCD are providing options for economic use of lands throughout eastern Oregon that currently have very few economic options. With this change, specific Youth Camp proposals will be subject to the appropriate local review that past legislative fixes specifically sought to avoid, violating both the spirit and letter of Goal 1 of the Statewide Planning Goals.

As the former Planning Director for Jefferson County, I am familiar with the Young Life property and the area in Jefferson County where the Big Muddy Ranch lies (not as familiar with the Wasco County side of the ranch). Although protected by Goal 3 land use regulations, this property contains overwhelmingly non-productive land. If you haven't visited the site, it looks like the type of land where the old spaghetti westerns were filmed – lots of rim rock, dry, rocky soil. It receives on average 12 inches of rain or less per year. This is not the type of property that warrants the strict protection for traditional agricultural resource uses that frankly can't occur on the property.

The challenge in this instance was to find a way to site additional youth camp facilities on a piece of property zoned Exclusive Farm Use with a long, colorful history of non-resource use. The proposed solution is a solid approach. Youth camps are already provided for in the Goal 4 (Forest Lands) subject to specific requirements. Providing this same ability on Goal 3 lands in eastern Oregon with class VI, VII & VIII recognizes the true inability to use such properties for the agricultural uses Goal 3 envisions. It also provides an economic use of specific types of EFU in rural areas and counties in severe need of these opportunities and the property tax revenue that will result. I applaud the efforts of the authors of this bill in finding a solution that benefits more than just one property owner – it really has the potential to benefit a number of communities throughout eastern Oregon.

Oregon's land use system is stringent in its approach to protecting Oregon's rural areas. Yet protection can go too far. This proposed change to ORS 215 and the ensuing Administrative Rules to be developed by DLCD with the assistance of the eastern Oregon counties is a vast improvement to a land use system that often times leaves very little opportunity for eastern Oregon land owners.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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