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Testimony to the Oregon House Land Use Committee in support of HB 2202

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am Bruce Chapin and live at 9965 Wheatland Rd. N Salem, Oregon 97303. I am the third generation to farm in the Mission Bottom area north of Keizer and serve as Chairman of the Oregon Farm Bureau Aggregate Committee. From 2004 to 2007 I represented OFB in the aggregate/agriculture consensus process set up by the Governor. Although the process did not resolve the conflict it provided a tremendous education on the subject.

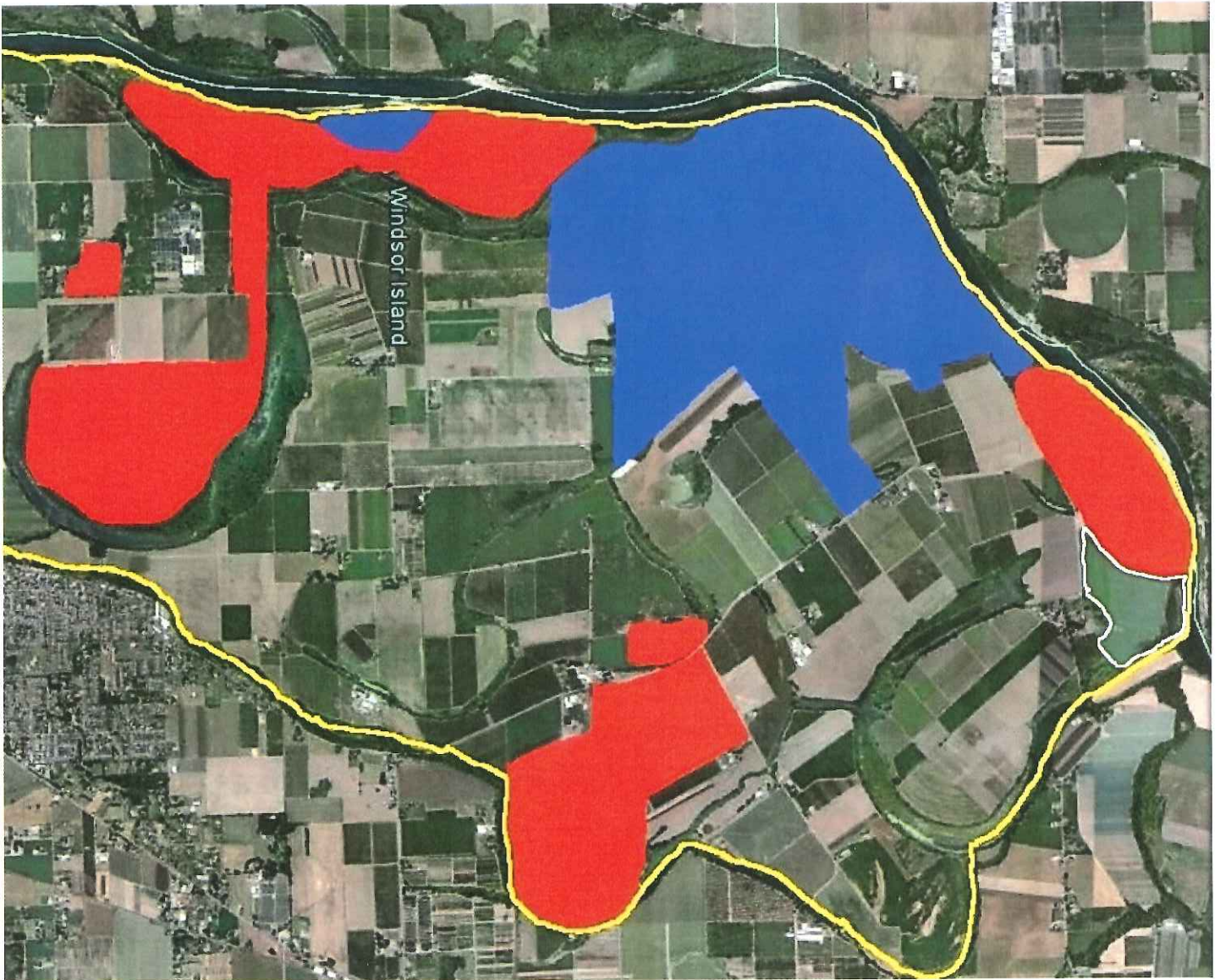
The problem that needs to be addressed is that in the Willamette Valley each year **aggregate strip mining is destroying on an estimated 200 to 400 acres of prime farmland.** For a visual comparison, we are annually losing the equivalent of about 45 to 90 city blocks of our best farmland. Recent DOGAMI data indicates there are over 10,000 acres being mined in the Willamette Valley

The Picture on the next page is a Google Earth map and out lined in yellow is the area N.W. of Keizer commonly known as Mission Bottom. There is no better farmland in Marion County. The red represents mined areas, areas being mined and areas dedicated for mining. The red areas represent a little over a 1000 acres in size. As I put this small map together I realized that this issue could be referred to as an invisible problem because more than a 1/3 of the red area currently shows no visible sign of being mined but it is all destined to be mined

The field outlined in white is not permitted yet but a series of aggregate test holes were drilled in it last year indicating that it is being very seriously considered for aggregate mining. This field is about 90 acres in size.

The area in blue is the Willamette Mission Park and is about 1800 acres in size.

Privately owned farmland is quickly disappearing in Mission Bottom. As a third generation farmer with two of my children farming with me this progressive loss of farmland in our area is a major concern to me.



In 2010 Marion County produced 3,060,000 tons of aggregate. Much of Marion County's aggregate production came from Mission Bottom and was shipped to the Portland area. Aggregate regularly travels to Portland by truck and by train.



This 18 car unit train makes multiple trips per day hauling aggregate from Mission Bottom to the Portland area. This demonstrates trains are tools that can economically haul aggregate long distances. Like most tools, trains can be used to assist with good or bad behavior. Although this train is being used to aid in the destruction of some of our best farmland, it demonstrates that trains could be used to economically haul aggregate long distances from sites that do not destroy high quality farmland.

There is virtually an unlimited supply of hard quarry rock located away from our best farm soils. Today about 50% of the Willamette Valley aggregate comes from hard rock quarries and I know of no examples where a hard rock quarry is destroying our best soils. Many opportunities exist to expand aggregate production from hard rock quarries in the Willamette Valley.



This hard rock quarry is located west of Hillsboro. We were told they had excavated down more than 500 feet. A quarry that excavates 500 feet deep will harvest a large quantity of aggregate while disturbing a relatively small surface area. In contrast many sand and gravel sites excavate less than 40 feet deep. Shallow aggregate mining requires many times more acres than deep mining to harvest the same quantity of aggregate.

Also there are very large deposits of round rock along the Columbia River deposited by the ancient Missoula floods that are under very poor soils. These round rock deposits along with hard rock quarry deposits are being economically transported to Portland by barge. Rock is being barged into Portland from Dallesport, Wishram, Boardman, St. Helens and British Columbia.



This picture shows a barge waiting to be loaded at Dallesport, Washington. In the background across the river is The Dalles, Oregon

While the aggregate industry has many alternatives to mining good farm soils the agricultural industry does not have reasonable alternatives to farming good soils as can be seen in the picture on the next page.



The filbert trees on the right are about five feet tall and nonproductive while the trees on the left are twenty five feet tall and very productive. All the trees are the same age, same variety and have received the same inputs. The difference is the quality of the soil between the right side of the picture and the left side.

While much is said about the potential alternatives the aggregate industry has please recognize that HB 2202 is not dependant on there being reasonable alternatives. The bill simply directs that alternatives be looked for. Looking for reasonable alternatives is a very necessary step in rational problem solving but currently the permitting process does not allow alternatives to be considered. Please support HB 2202 as it provides the local governments with the authority they need to appropriately balance the two industries' interests.

Respectably,

Bruce R Chapin

Oregon Farm Bureau Federation

Policy No. 3.700, Aggregate (2008)

We support requiring an "alternatives analysis and a needs analysis" as part of the aggregate permitting process when applying to mine high-value farmland soils in EFL zones. We support requiring the use of a permitting process with public hearings before allowing new or expanded commercial aggregate mining operations in EFL zones.

We support state and local governments using a higher percentage of quarry rock and a lower percentage of alluvial gravel mined from under high-value farmland soils in the Willamette Valley.

We support prohibiting the mining of rock when it is under high-value farmland soils or if the mining activities meet or exceed the depth of surrounding irrigation or domestic water wells within the boundaries of an aquifer.

Whenever an application for an aggregate removal operation is located on high-value farmland, before that application is approved, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Water Resources must examine the application and both sign off that the proposed mining/removal operation will not negatively impact agricultural operations and water rights on surrounding farms.

We believe facilities and structures including batch plants should be prohibited when surrounded by EFL land.

We support the removal of river rock from dry gravel bars.



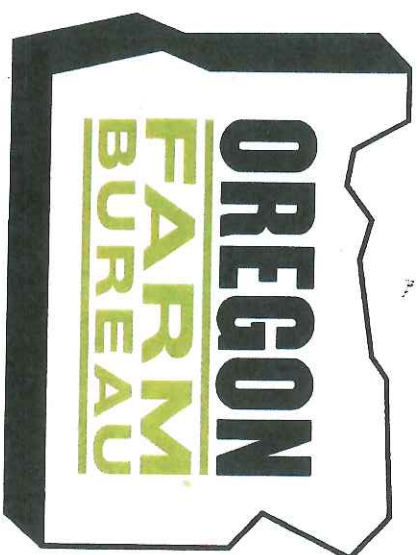
Productive farm soils in Lane County Oregon

Oregon agriculture is the second-largest economic engine in the state.⁵ While there are multiple options for aggregate mining, the long term success of Oregon agriculture relies on a finite supply of farmland - farmland that has diminished by over 650,000 acres in the past ten years.⁶

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Rock (Aggregate) Mining
in the Willamette Valley
Myths & Facts



Protect Oregon's Best Farmland

Myth 1: "Oregon's best soils are protected from rock mining."

Fact: Just under 20-percent of the land outside of the UGB in the Willamette Valley is Class 1 or 2 Soils¹ (our best soils). Oregon's Goal 5 Rule is designed to protect natural resources and conserve scenic and historic areas and open spaces. Ironically, the Willamette Valley is the only area in the state that Goal 5 allows the strip mining for aggregate on our best farm soils².

Myth 2: "The agricultural industry is trying to stop aggregate mining."

Fact: Unlike the agricultural industry, the aggregate industry has viable alternatives to mining Oregon's best farm soils. The conflict is over where aggregate is mined not if aggregate should be mined.

Myth 3: "Aggregate is only destroying a small amount of good farm soil."

Fact: It is estimated between 200 to 400 acres of farmland is being lost to aggregate mining each year in the Willamette Valley alone³. The equivalent of one average-sized farm a year.

Myth 4: "Miners are required to reclaim their sites back to farmland."

Fact: Even aggregate sites that destroy Oregon's most productive farmland

aren't required to be reclaimed back to farmland. Often sites that the Oregon Department of Mineral and Industries (DOGAMI) records as "reclaimed to agricultural" use are actually lakes; consequently DOGAMI's data on reclamation to agricultural use is very misleading.

Former strip mine "reclaimed" to DOGAMI standards for agricultural use.



Myth 5: "Round rock mined from the valley floor is preferred over angular quarry rock."

Fact: There are very few uses for round rock. Crushed rock is preferred or required for most uses because it interlocks and packs better than round rock. For example, ODOT specifications require the use of crushed rock in concrete and asphalt for road surfaces.

Myth 6: "Aggregate means 'sand and gravel'."

Fact: The term "aggregate" is a general term that includes much more than sand and gravel. It includes materials from many sources, including, but not limited to, hard rock quarries, recycled materials, decomposed granite deposits, cinder deposits as well as sand and gravel deposits.

Myth 7: "To meet demand, the aggregate industry must not be restricted from mining our best soils."

Fact: There is virtually an unlimited supply of hard quarry rock located away from our best farm soils. Many opportunities exist to expand aggregate production from rock quarries in the Willamette Valley that do not destroy our best farm soils. Also, there are large deposits of round and quarry rock along the Columbia River that can be economically transported to Portland by barge.

Myth 8: "Rock must be mined close to the market."

Fact: Rock from the Salem area is currently being shipped by both truck and rail to Portland. Still more rock is being economically shipped by barge to Portland from The Dalles, Boardman, St. Helens, and British Columbia.



International Company operating strip mine in Marion County. Destroying 20-foot of Class 1 and 2 soils to reach sand and gravel deposit.

Myth 9: "The aggregate industry is largely locally owned."

Fact: Four giant international companies from Australia, Europe, Japan, and North Dakota have aggressively bought up Oregon aggregate companies. These four companies now control an estimated 90-percent of Oregon's production, according to DOGAMI⁴. Locally owned and operated aggregate companies are quickly disappearing. In contrast less than 1-percent of Oregon's farms are non-family-owned corporations or other entities⁴.

¹ Soils: NRCS SSURGO data, 24k scale, January 1, 2008; Zoning: DLCD, 1986.

² OAR 660-023-0180(2)(a).

³ Estimate based on compiled data from DOGAMI.

⁴ February 19, 2007, House Natural Resource Committee informational meeting on aggregate: Gary Lynch: "We estimate now that about 90-percent of the production in the state is controlled by four companies."

⁵ "Oregon Agriculture and the Economy," OSU Special Report 1080: Oregon agriculture produces over \$25 billion in sales each year, and maintains 214,511 full-time and part-time jobs, about 10-percent of the jobs in Oregon.

⁶ "Oregon Agriculture and the Economy," OSU Special Report 1080, p. 3, table 1.