

During last week's House Land Use Committee hearing on HB 2173, supporters of the bill presented quite a bit of misinformation about the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's land exchange and proposed wetland restoration project in the Coquille Valley. Many of these issues will likely be addressed when testimony resumes this week, but there are a couple of additional points I'd like to clarify for the record:

- Contrary to last week's testimony, Coos county voters did not vote against "more marsh" or additional wetland restoration in last year's election; the question on the 2012 ballot instead focused on a proposal to authorize additional federal land acquisition in the county: "Do you support an expansion of the Bandon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge boundaries by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?" ([Measure 6-145 Bandon Marsh Advisory Vote](#))
- The federal Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant that will help fund wetland restoration in the Coquille Valley was not a stealth initiative. Like all federal grants awarded to state agencies, this one was approved by the Legislature twice – once before OWEB submitted its application, and again before the agency was allowed to accept the grant. The OWEB board has discussed the grant and related issues in its public meetings on a number of occasions.
- Local opponents of the ODFW land exchange have not lacked opportunities to air their concerns. ODFW held several local public hearings last year, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission heard extensive testimony before approving the project in December, and the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee devoted an entire interim hearing to opponents' concerns late last year. The state's Public Lands Advisory Committee held a final public hearing on the issue last month.
- The governing board of the Beaver Slough Drainage District, which has supported the ODFW project, is made up of farmers and ranchers who are neighbors of the project opponents, not powerful bureaucrats.

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