



Representative Brian Clem, Chair  
Representative Kevin Cameron, Vice Chair  
Representative Lee Frederick, Vice Chair

### **House Committee on Land Use**

The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) is testifying in opposition to House Bill 2173. OACD is fully aware, through discussions with its member Districts, of many of the ideas and perceptions concerning acquisition programs. All of them are valid to someone at some point in time and place. OACD does not feel this proposed legislation is the remedy to the issues that have been voiced.

We oppose HB 2173 for the following reasons:

The bill would require county conditional use permits for the "creation, restoration or enhancement of wetlands" on EFU lands. This requirement would increase the cost, complication and time needed to plan and implement voluntary and landowner's desired conservation projects. This complication at a time when agriculture water quality efforts are being scrutinized and questioned would certainly not be helpful.

The bill would limit liability protection for land owners who participate in fish and wildlife habitat improvement projects or a watershed or stream restoration or enhancement programs on EFU Lands. The loss of liability protections would bring to a standstill voluntary participation by landowners in conservation efforts promoted by Oregon's forty-five soil and water conservation districts. This provision would drastically curtail the ability to address the agriculture water quality efforts jointly planned and implemented by Districts, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Department of Environmental Quality and the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

The loss of liability protection and the conditional use permit requirement would cause a subsequent reduction in conservation projects being implemented and have a significant economic impact in many rural communities. Many of the state sponsored conservation efforts are leveraged by federal and/or private grant dollars which may not be available if landowners no longer wish to participate in conservation programs.

OACD would suggest that in lieu of this proposal, discussions and further education about the concerns and perceptions be initiated with input from interested stakeholders.