

From: Wheeler CRD [<mailto:wheelercitizens@comcast.net>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2015 10:27 AM
To: Davidson Ian
Subject: Testimony on HB 2633

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To: "Chair Clem and members of the committee"
Ian Davidson, Committee Administrator, ian.davidson@state.or.us

Ref: Oregon Land Use Goal 7, "Areas Subject to Natural Hazards"

My wife and I have a home in Wheeler, Oregon, located on Nehalem Bay. This is a small town, population about 400, with many part-time residents. Perhaps about 20 – 25 people are politically active and participate in local government. The City Council and Planning Commission are volunteer positions. Last year, the City undertook the effort to update its Comprehensive Plan. Both my wife and I served on a committee of citizens appointed by Council to perform this task.

When the committee progressed its update of the Comp Plan to Goal 7, a debate ensued over what could or should be addressed by the committee. The City has had three major documented landslides since 2000 that we know of. Two of these are logged in the DOGAMI SLIDO database and are FEMA slides. Many more slides are documented by SLIDO within the City Limits. Wheeler has no policy to deal with landslides. When the Committee Chair made the unilateral decision to have the existing Zoning Ordinance govern the Comprehensive Plan, this put policies of aggressive growth over the geological and Natural Hazards concerns. Knowing that there are active landslides within Wheeler, and more will likely be more landslides given the current logging in back of Wheeler and geologic history, and given what we feel are the Committees inappropriate response, we resigned. Central to the Committees response is the lack of Goal 7 guidelines and requirements.

A few specifics: In the past, the Planning Commission was given control of the Zoning Ordinance and this has set the town on a path towards aggressive growth. Residential zoning now allows outright 1 unit per 2500 square feet. The City's Comprehensive Plan Background Data Report cautions strongly that geologic conditions in Wheeler need to be at the forefront of planning. It states that Wheeler is built upon the hummocks of a geologically recent slide – somewhere between a few hundred and a few thousand years ago. It recommends that housing density be linked to steepness of slope, and recommends caution to preserve natural drainage, and control erosion.

In our view, Wheeler is now in the position of Oso, Washington, before its tragic landslide which killed 43 people and did untold millions in damage. That position is that Wheeler, in the absence of Goal 7 guidelines and minimum requirements, **such as an updated geologists report for the City and Watershed**, will issue building permits in geologically unstable areas, and will continue to allow building practices and density that are against the recommendations of its background data.

We encourage the committee to support legislation that would require LCDC to adopt administrative rules implementing Goal 7 and provides some money to accomplish this. These administrative rules will ensure that local governments take natural hazards into account when they are planning for the future. We also support Department of Land Conservation and Development to work with local governments on adaptive planning for existing structures in hazard areas and to assist local governments in mitigating danger from natural hazards. We think ultimately, this will save lives and help provide planning flexibility.

We strongly support HB 2633.

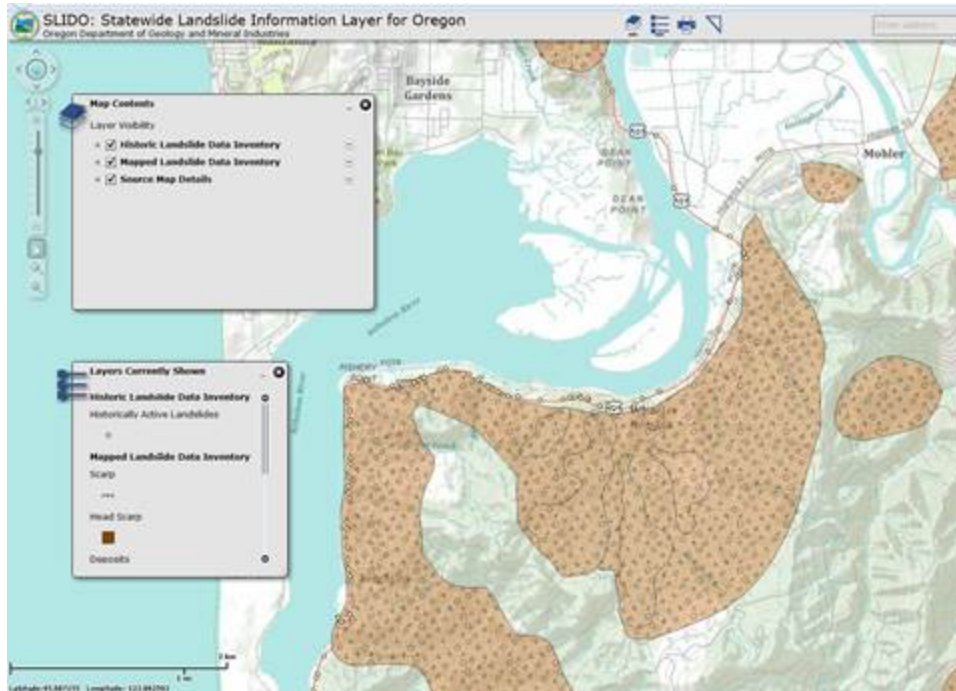
Ralph Thomas, P.E. (retired)
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Wheeler and the Wheeler Watershed

Oregon Forest Policy explained in one photo: The removal of vegetation and forests within the Wheeler watershed drainage in an area of historical landslide activity against the advice of geologists.

Clear cutting has denuded all vegetation from the hills above Wheeler, which geologically are the site of historic and active landslides. The resulting sedimentation and turbidity and herbicide spraying makes the watershed unsuitable for drinking and promotes the sedimentation of Nehalem Bay.



This is an actual display from the Statewide Landslide Information database for Oregon. The brown area indicates "historic" landslides. In Wheeler's case, these are landslides that occurred between a few hundred and a few thousand years ago. The yellow dots are more recent "active" landslides. Historic landslides such as this appear to be common up and down the Oregon Coast and not unique to Wheeler. (<http://www.oregongeology.org/sub/slido/>)