



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY AND MINERAL INDUSTRIES

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Oregon Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

April 7, 2015 Public Hearing on SB 778

Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) testimony

Chair Boquist, Vice Chair Monnes-Anderson, and Committee members, I am Richard Riggs, Assistant Director for the Department of Geology and Mineral Industries.

Thank you for allowing DOGAMI to comment on SB 778. SB 778 would give DOGAMI the authority to require tsunami hazard mitigation measures for certain types of new development in the designated tsunami hazard zone. That authority would extend to prohibition of the development if no satisfactory mitigation measures are possible. The bill would also change the occupancy threshold at which colleges or adult education schools are subject to regulation. DOGAMI takes no position on this bill, but we would like to review the existing regulations and comment on what we see as potential consequences and costs.

There is a clear scientific consensus that Oregon faces a significant risk of an earthquake as large as magnitude 9 along the Cascadia Subduction Zone. Because of the proximity of the Subduction Zone to the Oregon coast, such an earthquake would generate a very large tsunami that would arrive at the coast within minutes of the earthquake. Many Oregon coastal communities face truly catastrophic destruction and loss of life in the event of the next Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake.

Since the 1995 passage of SB 379, DOGAMI has had a statutory role (ORS 455.446 and 455.447) in regulation of development in the designated tsunami inundation zone. The Governing Board of the Department establishes the boundaries of the tsunami inundation zone by rule (OAR Chapter 632 Division 005). Certain essential facilities, defined in the statute, are prohibited from being constructed in the designated inundation zone. Developers of other types of high-occupancy or hazardous facilities specified in statute must consult with the Department about tsunami mitigation measures before obtaining a building permit. The developer is not required to act on the Department's recommendations.

Some facilities, chiefly those that are water-dependent like docks, are exempt. For essential facilities that are prohibited by statute from being sited in the inundation zone, the Governing Board may grant exceptions, through an application and review process, which includes a public hearing.

To date, there have been 14 instances in which DOGAMI has been contacted about developments in the inundation zone, and in 7 of those, the developer has been required to consult with DOGAMI. There have been no requests for exceptions.

We do not know how many essential facilities have been sited outside of the tsunami inundation zone as a result of this regulatory program.

The Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries provides earth science information and regulation to make Oregon safe and prosperous. Learn more at www.OregonGeology.org