

Thursday, April 16, 2015

**Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use, and  
Water**

**State of Oregon  
Oregon State Capitol Building  
9800 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301**

Laurie Freeman Swanson

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## **Subject HB2666**

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Members of the Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use and Water,

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I agree with the Farm Bureau in suggesting denial of HB2666 & its amendments. It goes over the Ors & changes laws for the siting of an aggregate project. These laws have been developed over 40 plus years of concentrated testing efforts. It is a sneak around to the back door to stand to a weaker test of acceptability. Something that will take farmlands out of production for all time.

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This Bill is a smoke screen. It makes life easier & less expensive for gravel companies while making it more difficult and more expensive for farmers to oppose an application. Many of the farms in our area are single family owned as opposed to the gravel mine owners...of which we are actually speaking of a total of around 4 major companies throughout all of the United States. A few of those companies are owned by groups from other countries.

The current rules of application speak to the needs of farming and the ability of neighboring farm owners to be able to attend to their individual businesses without damage from any facility

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nearby. Farming is a business. Farms are not extended parks or petting zoos.

Farmlands previously faced with gravel applications continue to thrive and have become stronger after denial. And why not?

....after all, we are talking about valuable type 1 & 2 soils. In our area, if the applications had been approved, we would be minus over 350 acres of farm land. Possibly more if the river had failed, from the poor mine design, and inundated the neighboring farmland. The surrounding berry farms are thriving, something that would have been put in jeopardy. Two major chicken farms are able to continue with their grows without threat of loss of water and stress do to noise and dust pollution\*. Large herds of cattle graze on tended rich fields where there would have been no fields. Row crops including beans and pumpkins thrive. An irrigation company distributes water that tends to these farmlands without the risk of pollution . Wells supply water without risk of dewatering or pollution.

A few years ago, I decided to lease out some acreage for row crops. I put an ad in the Capitol Press. It no sooner hit the page than the phone was ringing off the hook. Most of the many people I interviewed really wanted to lease the entire 250 acre farm for their production. Contrary to some rumors, farming is big.

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As shipping to market situations continue to become more complicated, our local farm markets are rising to the top on the list of importance. Not only is fresh, healthy, & safe important, but costs say it is getting to be the best way to distribute food.

I have dealt with the gravel companys' arguments since 2001. I have throughout wondered why a business group would think that it is productive to destroy a healthy industry, that offers basic food needs, in order that they prosper. I challenge them with the idea of doing better. What will make each industry stronger as opposed to merely trying to do business the easiest way at the destruction of hundreds of acres of productive farmland...never to be usable in anyone's lifetime. In my view, we risk throwing away gold.

Something that I think would be important to the application process would be to require an accurate measure of rock product available vs. product need. In our area that study was done and was reflected in the outcome of some permitting decisions.

Having 3-5 times more than the necessary amount of land approved for mining with the end result of totally destroying that amount of valuable farm land forever does not make sense.

The option I believe is to go to land that is not top productive farm land, ship down river, etc. Our Willamette Valley area is the

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only area in Oregon that faces gravel applications that overlay type 1 & 2 soils.

Thank you for your attention to my testimony.

Laurie Freeman Swanson

Owner of 250 acre farm: Raising Cattle , Cattle Hay, Horse Training Business (Jumpers), Horse Event Production, Lease Property Farmland, Large Hay Storage Business

- \*At one point a speaker for the applicants said, if there is a problem, we can talk about it later and try to fix it. What they failed to mention was, if a grow crop of chickens dies.....the parent company would immediately drop the grower and that would be the end of his business.