

DATE: April 16th, 2015

TO: The House Committee on Rural Communities: Chairman Brian Clem, Vice Chair Ken Helm, Vice Chair Bill Post, Vic Gilliam, Brad Witt & House Republican Leader Mike McLane.

REGARDING: HB 2666

FROM: Sam Sweeney, 1070 Ferry St. Dayton, Or. A Yamhill County, Dayton area farmer

I strongly urge you to reject HB 2666. This bill if adopted, even with the amendments, would make it even easier to convert some of our best and most precious farm areas to mineral extraction. Even under present regulations it is a lopsided process designed to put farmers at a disadvantage in objecting to conversions of prime farmland to mineral extraction. HB 2666 is designed to prevent nearly any objection and allow mining companies to mine on farmland regardless of how it affects nearby farms.

Our family farms in Yamhill County and have closely watched the loss of the county's best farmland under the present inadequate conversion regulations. Since 2001 there have been three applications to mine in the counties Willamette River bottoms. All three were opposed and fought vigorously by numerous concerned citizens who hired attorneys, expert witness and spent a lot of money in the process. However, all three were eventually approved.

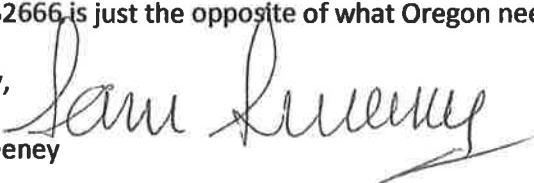
The result, the loss of over 800 acres of prime flood enriched farmland. Grand Island, an island of the best of soils, with old seniority, full season irrigation rights, low head pumping costs, close proximity to markets, and capable knowledgeable, innovative farmers will be severely impacted. Historically, the island contributes a lot to the county and the state's economy both in high farm gate commodity prices but also providing numerous jobs starting from the farm level on up to the consumer. In other words, Grand Island is a "Poster child" of an area that should never be touched by a mining company's track hoe. But it lost 650 acres or 16% of its farmable land in less than ten years under the current unfair regulations. It is a prime example of why the current regulations are not working to protect the best of Oregon's agricultural areas

It has been estimated that when the companies start to mine Grand Island that the farmers and approximately 30 families who live there will face a large gravel truck every 90 seconds on the only single road and bridge to the island! Yet, since it is a public road, this could not be considered as sufficient evidence to affect agriculture. So, what is the future for Grand Island? A county planner said that unless present laws are changed to protect our river bottom areas, Grand Island would be lost for agricultural use in 100 years.

The conversion regulations definitely need to be changed. But to ones that would reflect Oregon Citizens values and their desire to protect the states prime but very limited Willamette Valley flood plain soils. HB2666 is just the opposite of what Oregon needs. It needs to be soundly rejected.

Sincerely,

Sam Sweeney





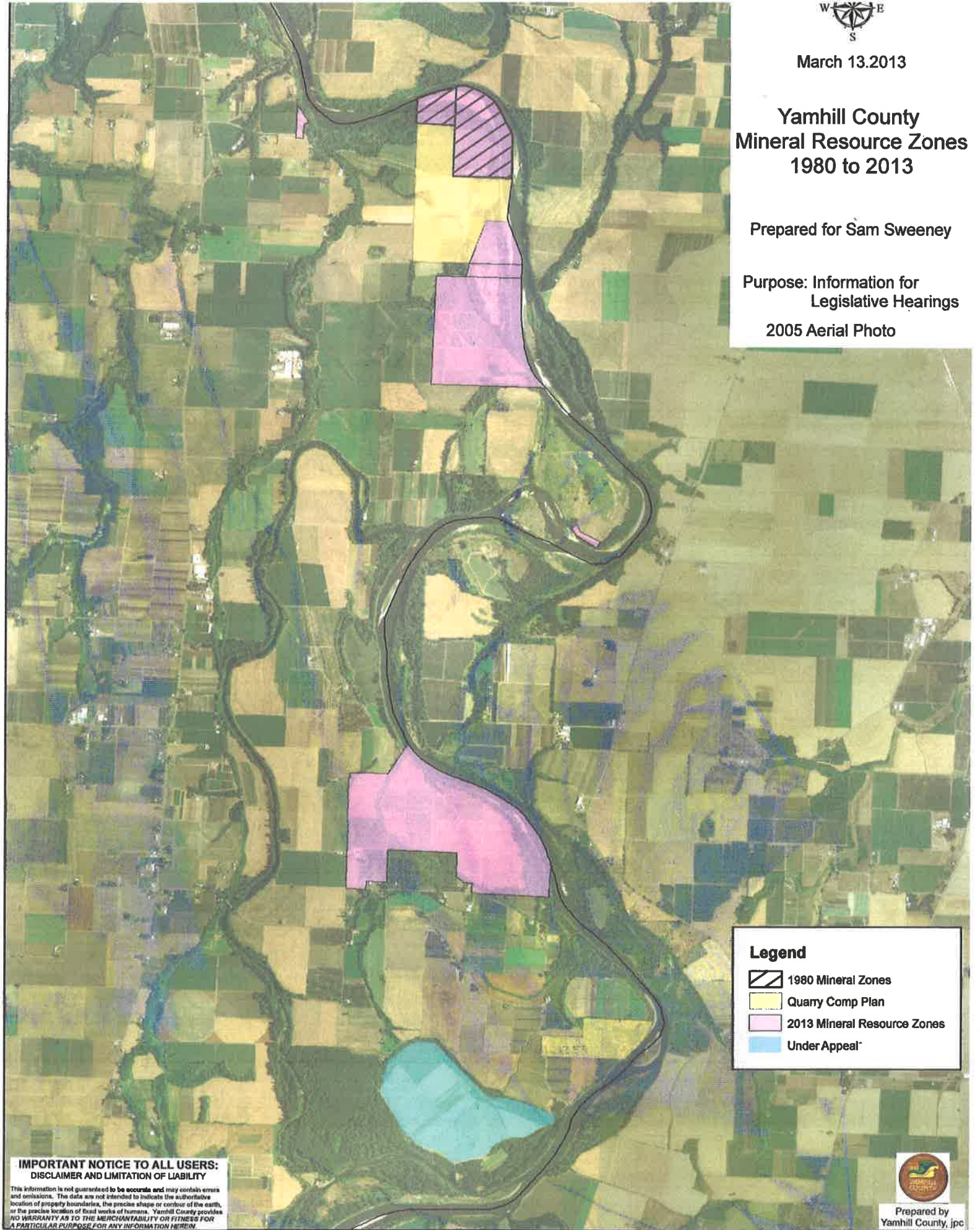
March 13, 2013

Yamhill County Mineral Resource Zones 1980 to 2013

Prepared for Sam Sweeney

Purpose: Information for
Legislative Hearings

2005 Aerial Photo



Legend

-  1980 Mineral Zones
-  Quarry Comp Plan
-  2013 Mineral Resource Zones
-  Under Appeal

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Prepared by
Yamhill County, jpc