

From: [Katie Voelke](#)
To: [SENR Exhibits](#)
Subject: SB 1517
Date: Thursday, February 04, 2016 2:09:12 PM

I write today on behalf of the North Coast Land Conservancy's board, staff, and 1000+ supporters, to express great concern regarding SB 1517. Our mission, "Helping to conserve Oregon's coastal lands, forever" is solely based on the willing private landowners in our community within our service area (Astoria to Lincoln city) who care about Oregon's natural values and are motivated to personally participate in its protection and rehabilitation. Without those landowners, the public benefits which Oregon seeks to maintain; clean water, wildlife and fish habitat, and healthy streams, cannot be achieved. We actively support voluntary, collaborative community based conservation, and want to support efforts that keep conservation from having negative community impacts.

It seems unnecessary to erect these barriers in the way of landowners, soil and water conservation districts, municipalities, water and parks districts and other local and state agencies who are working to provide public benefits through their stewardship efforts. Many of the issues underlying SB 1517 are best addressed at the local level, not with a statewide legislative mandate. To date, we are aware of no negative impacts on a landowner due to conservation or restoration.

Removing the liability shield for landowners will discourage individuals from participating in voluntary conservation actions. SB 1517 would limit liability protections for landowners who voluntarily participate in habitat or watershed improvement projects. These liability protections are an important tool for working with landowners to accomplish restoration on private land. These protections are designed to encourage operators, timber owners, and landowners to voluntarily improve fish and wildlife habitat, and thus relieve regulatory pressure. By removing these protections, landowners are far less likely to engage in voluntary conservation projects in cooperation with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds is a voluntary program serving as Oregon's solution to the avoiding the federal listing of salmon species. If barriers are put in place that make it very difficult for landowners to participate, and arduous for counties to permit and regulate, the core success of the plan will no longer prevail. Amongst other concerns, we are concerned that erecting this legislative barrier could open Oregon up, once again, to new federal endangered species listings.

Thank you for your public service and for taking the time to review this concern and request that you oppose SB 1517. Through community and state wide dialogue, we are confident that non legislative actions can alleviate these concerns.

Respectfully yours,

Katie Voelke
Executive Director

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