

# Tillamook County



*Land of Cheese, Trees and Ocean Breeze*

Tillamook County Commissioners  
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## Senate Committee on Environment & Natural Resources Chair, Senator Edwards Testimony on SB 1517

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair Olson. For the record my name is Mark Labhart. I have had the privilege of serving for the last 12 years as a Tillamook County Commissioner. I also serve on the Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Committee and the AOC Board of Directors. I have been asked by AOC to represent the position of the Association of Oregon Counties in my testimony before you tonight. In summary SB 1517 requires certain findings by the local governing body for creation, restoration or enhancement of wetlands in exclusive farm use zones. Our Association voted unanimously to support this Bill and we ask you to support this Bill with the dash 3 amendments and move it forward.

I would like to personally thank Senator Edwards and Olson for their leadership in helping to craft a Bill that will hopefully pass muster with this committee. They both took time out of their busy lives along with Senators Johnson and Roblan as well as Rep. Gomberg to come to Tillamook County on a very rainy and cold day to tour several wetland restoration sites with representatives from the Farm Bureau, the TCCA, the Governor's office, the Nature Conservancy, Tillamook Estuaries Partnership and others to better understand the issue before rural Oregon. I also appreciate their follow-up meeting with various interest groups in Salem to help work collaboratively to draft the Legislation that is before us today.

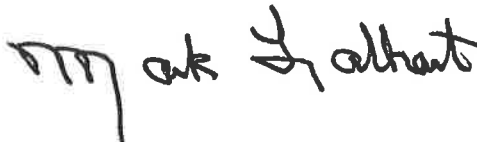
This Bill allows rural Oregon and local governments to have a say in what happens in their communities. I'm going use the Harney County example of what you can do to make things work. No, it's not the occupation and what a group can wrongly do to try and force things to happen. Local government in Harney worked closely with environmental groups, landowners, the Governor's office and federal agencies to craft a solution to the Sage Grouse conflict. The end result was a decision by the federal government not to list the sage grouse. Lots of work done by some really dedicated people to make it work. Local government had a key role in helping to make that happen. We want this collaborative process to happen with farm land and wetland restoration projects. Right now, local governments essentially have little to no say in the conversion of prime farm land to wetlands in there counties. Let me say right up front, we support the restoration of wetlands where appropriate. It is desperately needed to restore prime Coho habitat in our case and other bird, fish and other wildlife species in other parts of the state. We also need to protect our vanishing prime farm lands throughout Oregon. A key component of Oregon's Land use system is the protection of farm and forest lands. We take this very seriously in Tillamook County. We want you all to continue to enjoy our world famous Tillamook Cheese. There are opportunities to convert and/or restore poorer quality farm lands to wetlands where appropriate.

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Local governments are close to the ground. We are close to the people. We know and work collaboratively with other natural resource agencies just as they have done in Harney County around the Sage Grouse issue. We want the opportunity to develop collaborative processes and not just have the state or federal government tell us we know what is best for your county so just live with it. There are likely some people in this room today that will testify against this Bill because they don't believe local governments should have a say in what happens in their communities or they see local government as an impediment to their desires. Oregon's land use laws were built on a process of collaboration and working together. We in local government are asking and pleading with you to give us a seat at the table as decisions are being made essentially without our input.

We applaud the governor's office for working with the Farm Bureau, environmental groups and AOC on this important issue. While their proposed amendments do not fully address the issues before us, we very much appreciate their willingness to come to the table and offer a proposal for consideration. I believe it is a clear recognition that local governments do have a role in decision making that directly affects rural Oregon. AOC believes that the Farm Bureau amendments do provide an opportunity for meaningful county engagement in this issue. We look forward to continuing this discussion in the Work Session and hopefully reach agreement on the amendments.

Thank You for considering my testimony.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Galbreath". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chair, Tillamook County Board of Commissioners on behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties