



March 6, 2017

The Honorable Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Energy and Environment
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Oregon Natural Desert Association testimony in support of HB 2711

Chair Helm and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 2711. Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) is a not-for-profit conservation organization based in Bend that exists to protect, defend and restore Oregon's high desert on behalf of our more than 6,000 members and supporters from across Oregon and beyond.

HB 2711 would put in place a ten year moratorium on the hydraulic fracturing (fracking) of wells used for exploration or development of oil and gas wells in Oregon. ONDA supports HB 2711 as a reasonable and forward-thinking measure that will allow the State of Oregon and our counties and communities sufficient time to develop a regulatory framework for oil and gas that will prevent undue impacts on human health and safety and the environment.

ONDA is not aware of active exploration, development or production of oil and gas resources in eastern Oregon. However, despite the lack of current development activity, we are aware of thousands of acres of oil and gas leases held on both private and public lands in several eastern Oregon counties. We are also aware of exploration and development of oil and gas resources - just across the state line in western Idaho - targeting geological formations that may be similar to those in eastern Oregon. This indicates the possibility of resurgent interest in oil and gas development in Oregon, which warrants a cautious and thoughtful approach in order to prevent undue impacts to the communities and environment of eastern Oregon. Such a process would also provide reasonable regulatory certainty for prospective oil and gas developers and the lack of current activity would indicate that development of reasonable regulations can take place without undue impacts on those developers.

Eastern Oregon is home to wonderful and diverse communities, outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities and spectacular but fragile ecosystems and watersheds home to

hundreds of species of native plants and fish and wildlife. As in other areas of the western United States these values can be threatened by ill-conceived and poorly regulated oil and gas development.

Recent newspaper headlines from the communities in eastern Oregon and western Idaho convey the all-too-common story associated with oil and gas development in the western United States¹. Oil and gas exploration and development, including fracking, often begins to take place before states and communities develop plans and guidance for such development to provide reasonable safeguards for health, safety and environmental protection.

The State of Oregon and the counties and communities of eastern Oregon are not adequately prepared for oil and gas development and need to take a deliberate approach to developing a robust regulatory framework before such activity begins and creates harmful impacts². A key first step in such a process is to ensure that rapid oil and gas development does not rush or undermine the creation of thoughtful, balanced regulations. A moratorium on fracking will be an effective means of preventing unnecessary impacts and allow the time needed to create the necessary framework.

ONDA supports HB 2711 as a common sense measure to protect communities and the environment from the often irreversible impacts of oil and gas fracking and to allow the State of Oregon an appropriate amount of time to strengthen its regulatory framework for oil and gas development.

Sincerely,



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¹ http://www.argusobserver.com/news/idaho-homeowners-fight-texas-company-over-natural-gas-well/article_fcd478b0-c2f5-11e6-805f-0fc1aae53296.html;
http://www.argusobserver.com/independent/news/legislators-ask-for-peace-at-oil-and-gas-meeting/article_a0d00bc4-8741-11e5-ad66-63e43b1373de.html

² http://www.argusobserver.com/news/oregon-s-oil-gas-laws-lag-behind-idaho/article_e19576b4-544f-11e5-944c-afd35a66184e.html