

From the desk of
Sam Marshall
6th July 2017



July 5, 2017

RE: Vote no on SB 644 A8

Dear Legislators:

Senate Bill 644 A8 is before you on the floor today. The Oregon Natural Desert Association sincerely appreciates the hard work that some of you have put into this bill in order to achieve a workable compromise. However, we are unable to support this legislation as good policy, and we urge your no vote.

Despite its amendments, SB 644 still risks undermining Oregon's significant and long-term investment in sage-grouse conservation by creating uncertainty and confusion about how the sage-grouse rules will be applied. The risk to years of conservation effort is not warranted when a major mining project such as that envisioned in SB 644 already has feasible pathways for reasonable and thoughtful permitting through existing law.

Mining operations often result in increased demands on infrastructure such as roadways and power supplies which can also impact existing, permitted uses in the EFU zone. Mining can also result in impacts to wildlife habitat and other natural resources in the area surrounding a mining operation. The potential impacts of mining operations on other EFU uses and our state's natural resources warrant thorough, robust planning and review under Oregon's land use system.

This bill purports to streamline the permitting process for some types of mining activities. However, we believe that the permitting procedures it proposes may actually make the process more complicated. SB 644 proposes troubling changes with respect to establishing mining operations in Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) zones in seven eastern Oregon counties.

Mining requires sensible and comprehensive regulation and oversight to ensure that impacts to the environment, other land uses and communities are minimized. Without appropriate safeguards the result is all-too-often the long-term degradation of the environment and impacts to human health, safety and well-being. Oregon's Mined Land Reclamation Act and other relevant law and regulation currently provide the needed environmental protections as well as ample flexibility for mining operators and should not be altered as envisioned in SB 644.

Please oppose Senate Bill 644 to help conserve some of the most important attributes of eastern Oregon and maintain Oregon's effective and reasonable land use system.