

Opposition Testimony on HB 4075 Proposed Urbanization of North Hillsboro Rural Reserve

February 8, 2017

I farm and manage 280 acres in the Helvetia and Banks area of Washington County. That land produces timber, wine grapes, breeding stock, grass seed and commercial honey. During the urban-rural reserves process, Washington County communities and Metro spent 2 years analyzing and discussing objective data and negotiating which areas would be urbanized and developed and identifying those areas that were critical for protecting high value farmland and important natural resources for the future. The goal of the process was to create some certainty for the three Metro counties. Proposed HB 4075 would totally subvert that process and open up those areas designated Rural Reserves for development.

Thanks in part to the historic Missoula floods, Washington County has much of the highest classed soils in the Willamette Valley. The area described as North Hillsboro and targeted for urban development by HB 4075 is an integral part of the Sunset Corridor—the largest remaining Class 1 soil district in the county. The Class 1 Non-irrigated Soil Capability Class is the highest rating given by the federal agency National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS Soil Capability maps are the defining objective source of data for evaluating the potential productivity of agricultural lands.

There were historically 4 major areas of NRCS Class 1 soils in Washington County (see county overview map). Two are no longer available for agriculture, having been covered by the city of Sherwood and the Hillsboro Tech district. The remaining two are the Sunset Corridor and a smaller one south of Cornelius. The Sunset Corridor of Class 1 soils stretches from the current Hillsboro tech district to the west of North Plains and the North Hillsboro area is an integral SE portion of that area (see attached maps 2 & 3).

Opening up the North Hillsboro district in the Sunset Corridor for development would be a knife in the heart of future farming in the county and should be abandoned and put to rest permanently. It would separate two important Washington County agricultural areas into islands with an urbanized band hindering farmers with lands in both areas. The idea of placing this area in an urban reserve was originally based on the flawed concept that because it wasn't in the Tualitan Valley Irrigation District it was an agricultural area of lesser importance. In an era of increasing water needs and future shortages this vision couldn't be further from the truth. These Class 1 non-irrigated soil capability districts are precisely the ones that should be preserved for the future. They can **and currently do** produce valuable crops and support our agricultural base and families in the county without requiring additional water.

Continually holding up the threat of developing important agricultural areas that were agreed upon during the Urban-Rural Reserves process creates an uncertainty that the process was developed to correct. It creates speculative land pricing so active farmers can't afford to purchase additional land, and makes them hesitant to make needed capital investments. It prevents young farmers from starting viable agricultural operations. It creates increased traffic through farming areas, hindering operations and jeopardizing safety. Simply put, it creates more urban sprawl, more reliance on the automobile, more greenhouse emissions, and robs our children of a reasonable future.

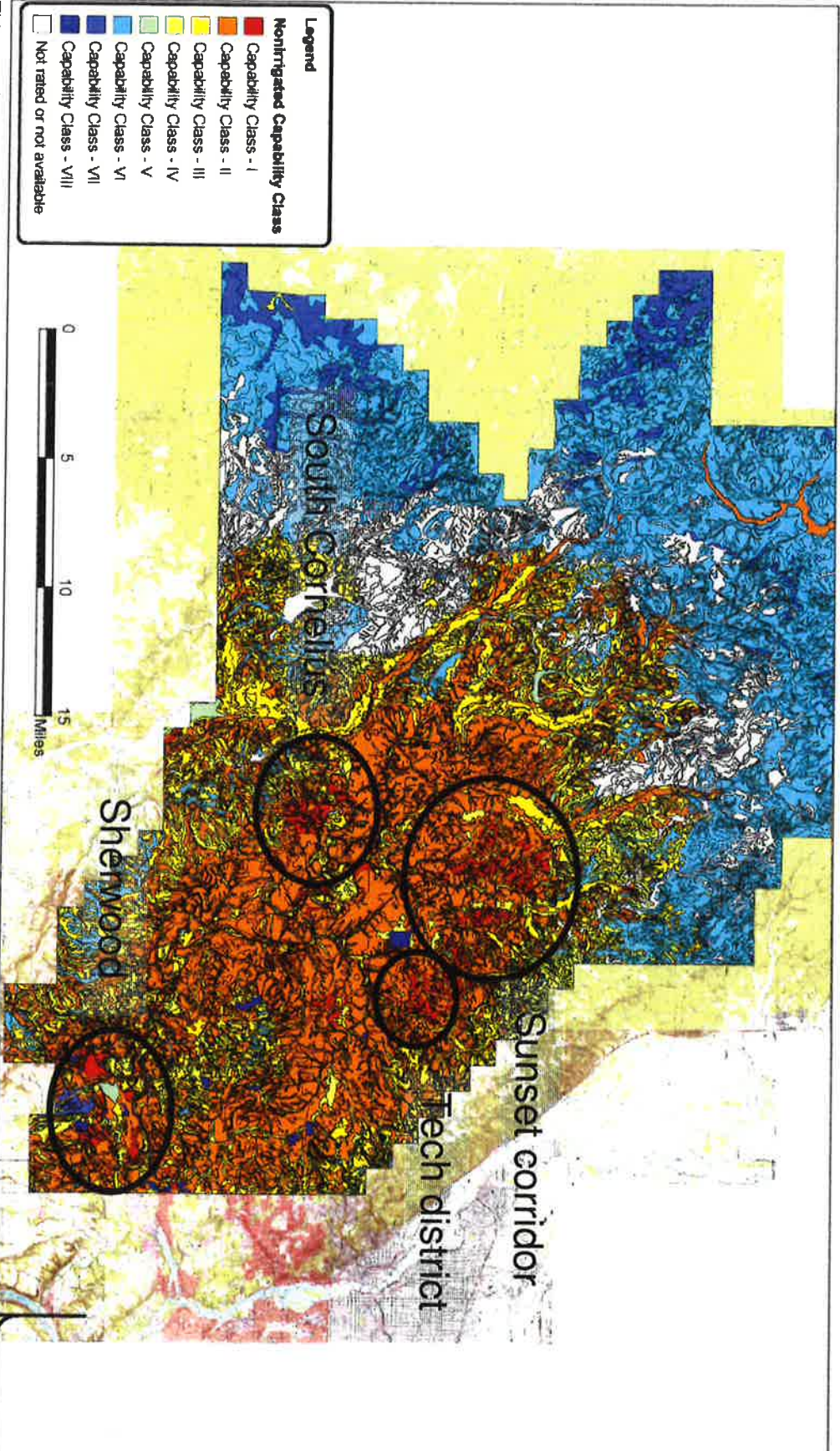
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4 areas of concentrated Class I soils

Washington County
Soils by nonirrigated capability class

Assisted By: Nathan P. Adelman
USDA-NRCS
08 March 2011

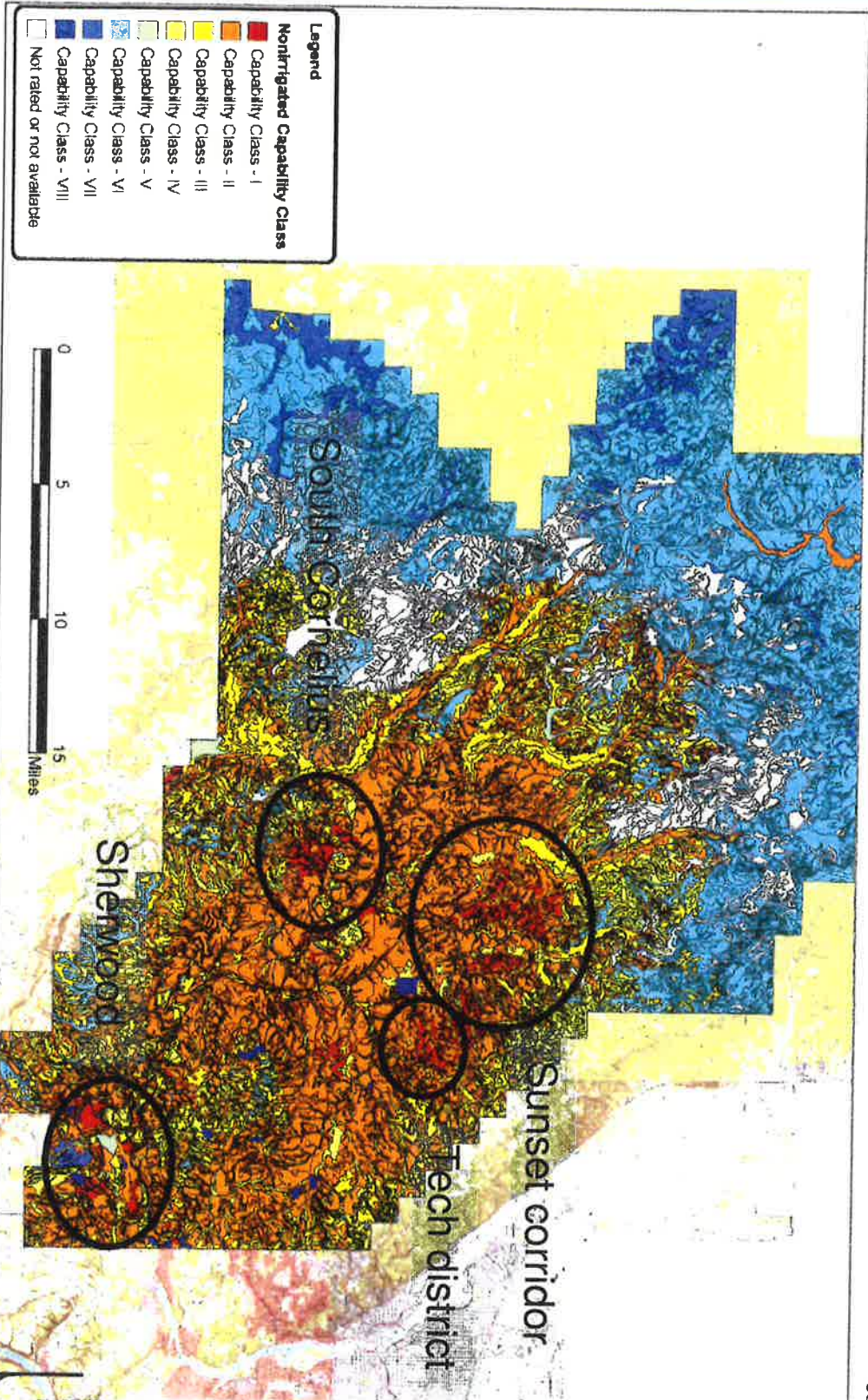


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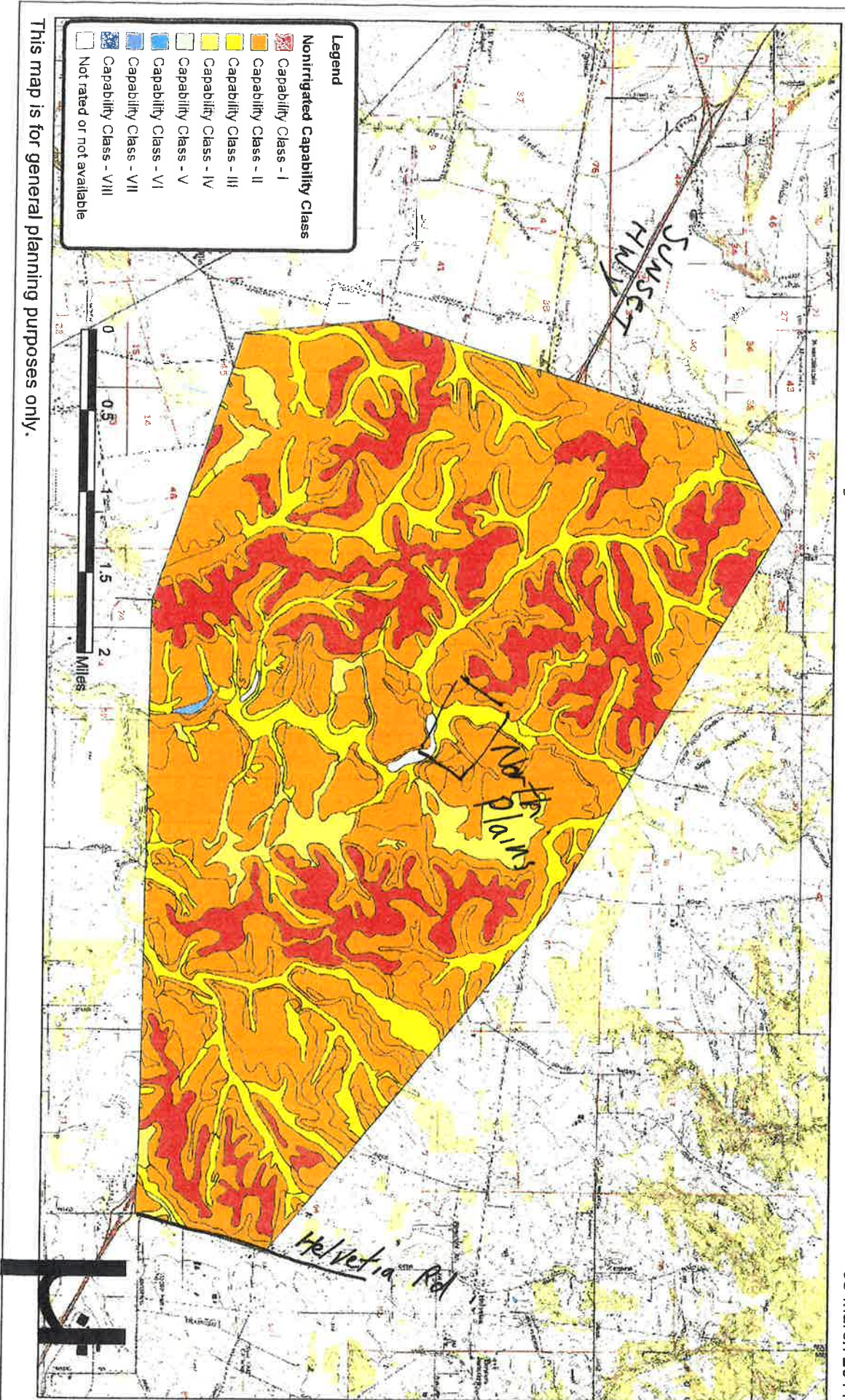
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Sunset Class I Soil District Soils by nonirrigated capability class

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USDA-NRCS
08 March 2011



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