



Oregon Association of  
Conservation Districts

April 1, 2019

To: House Committee on Energy and Environment

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From: The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Re: HB 2322 Committee to review land use planning goals and renewable energy development

To Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Reschke and Schouten, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2322. I am testifying on behalf of the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts to express support for the amendment to the bill. OACD serves and represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which are special districts governed by elected boards. The Districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by supporting voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners and managers as well as federal, state, and nonprofit partners. **Establishing a committee to review the recommendation to change land use planning goals, would help ensure changes to land use goals do not damage the agricultural land and open spaces that support our economy, soil and water, and wildlife.**

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) were founded following the Dust Bowl, an event that brought national attention to the need to conserve natural resources and natural resource industries, and is now looked to as an analogue for the impacts of climate change. We support renewable energy and the efforts of this legislature and many other Oregonians to mitigate and adapt to climate change. However, renewable energy development must be approached cautiously and in the context of the effects on land use, natural resources, wildlife, and natural resource industries. Several SWCDs have encountered situations where solar development has threatened farmland. Since Oregon's land use program was implemented in 1974, half a million acres of land has been taken out of production and 65,600 acres have been taken out of Exclusive Farm Use zoning. In contrast, we are a net exporter of energy and renewable energy development is already strong under current land use policies: there are more than 146,000 acres of commercial wind and solar projects that will generate 3,213 megawatts of electricity pending.

**Agriculture is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest economic driver in our state (\$8.2 billion annually), a source of long-term employment opportunities, and creates important wildlife habitat and migratory corridors throughout the state. Furthermore, agricultural and natural lands are critical to climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.** According to Griscom, et al. (2017), such lands can address 37% of carbon emissions globally, are among the most cost-effective solutions, and provide co-benefits like habitat, resilience to fires and floods, and soil and water quality. These tradeoffs must be considered while promoting renewable energy development.

Renewable energy development is one of many threats to agricultural succession and conservation. This threat could become even more concerning if land use planning policies are changed without carefully considering impacts on other land uses. Renewable energy development is a complex issue with tradeoffs that could have long-lasting implications for our natural resources and natural-resource based economy. A committee like the one proposed in the amendment to HB 2322 would help **prevent unintended consequences from inadequately considering the tradeoffs between renewable energy development and the land and natural resources that are pillars of Oregon's agricultural economy, wildlife populations, recreation, and resilience.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding HB 2322 and the importance of maintaining the conservation value of our statewide land use goals while we pursue our renewable energy goals. We thank Representative Marsh, Representative Helm, and others who worked on this bill for recognizing the need to further discuss this issue through a committee, rather than direct and immediate changes to land use planning goals.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



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