



COOS COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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Senate Committee On Environment and Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: House Bill 2573, Removing Cranberries from High Value Crop Definition

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

HB 2573 will help provide some relief to cranberry growers. Other farm operators are required to use the soils to determine high-value farm lands and this bill will not change that requirement. Most cranberry farms have been modified to allow the growth of cranberries and will not meet the high-value soils test. This may allow more people to invest in smaller farms if a dwelling can be sited on the farm.

As the Planning Director for Coos County, I have heard for many years from local cranberry farmers about the decline in value for this specific crop. When a property owner that grows cranberries visits with Planning Staff regarding other uses they may be able to conduct on their property or to site a dwelling on the property, the primary reason for the visit is to save the farm or to relocate to the farm to allow expenses to be reduced. Most of them do not want to convert their bogs or change from farm use.

When the planners have to respond that because they are growing cranberries they are automatically considered high-value farm crop and must show a gross income of \$80,000 a year, the landowner's response is that they contacted the Planning Department because they are unable to make that type of income and are searching for a way to make the farm economically feasible to continue operation.

Planners have to explain to property that the statutory requirement states that high-value farmland includes land with very productive 'prime, unique, Class I and II soils' and land that grows 'specified perennials' such as nursery stock, berries, fruits, nuts, Christmas trees, or vineyards. The question from the property owner is why cranberries cannot be included in the exclusions such as seed crops, hay, pasture, and alfalfa. I have not been able to answer this question. However, with the passing of HB 2573 I may be able to offer a solution.

I would like to ask that you please support this bill.

Jill Rolfe

Jill Rolfe
Coos County Planning Director