

2023.01.24

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water,
Oregon House of Representatives

Re: Support for HB 2527

Dear Members,

I would like to please encourage you to support HB 2527, to give all Oregonians the freedom to conserve, restore, or maintain our State's imperiled oak habitat, instead of having to devote one's land to forestry or agriculture to avoid tax penalties.

I have won awards from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society, for conservation and leadership in the conservation of the Willamette Valley's oak savanna. However, based on my experience, I fear I cannot recommend anyone try to do the same without warning them of potentially significant financial penalties under present laws. For my efforts, I became at risk of losing \$50,000 for one property and more than that for another, under State laws. The latter law was corrected, and fortunately for me, I ultimately escaped both losses. However, the process was long and stressful, and risk remains.

HB 2527 would seem to go a good way to eliminate such disincentives, without causing the State to incur any loss in present property taxes.

Additionally, I hope that by enacting HB 2527, Oregon might help lead the way to address remaining conservation disincentives in administration of the US Endangered Species Act. Notable examples include potential restrictions or mitigation fees to participate in Habitat Conservation Plans. Benton County, the State of Wisconsin, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service have already taken some partial steps to address these disincentives. With encouragement such as from HB 2527, I hope the Service might do more, such as through its discretion under ESA §4(d).

My experience led me to try to daylight these issues and potential opportunities in a master's thesis. For anyone interested, a copy is freely downloadable from the University of Oregon, at: <http://hdl.handle.net/1794/13343>

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

—Adam Novick

Adam Novick
3715 Donald St.
Eugene OR 97405