

Submitter: Carol Chesarek

On Behalf Of: Forest Park Neighborhood Association

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure: HB2527

Chair Helm and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water,

Forest Park Neighborhood Association (which is recognized by Portland and Multnomah County) strongly supports HB 2527, which would help reactivate the Wildlife Tax Deferral Program in our area. We are grateful to West Multnomah SWCD for their continued advocacy for this program.

Our neighborhood stretches across a large area of the Tualatin Mountains west of downtown Portland, from West Burnside Road to Cornelius Pass Road. Portland's Forest Park lies within our neighborhood, as does a wide swath of rural unincorporated Multnomah County. Forest Park is surrounded by private land with high value wildlife habitats that are Oregon Conservation Strategy Habitats. We see wildlife from elk, cougar, and the occasional black bear to state-listed Northern Red Legged Frogs on this land. An overwhelming majority of our more than 1200 residents value these habitats and headwater streams and want to protect them, but there are few tools available.

We have been frustrated for many years because property owners in our area who want to protect valuable habitat on their land don't have access to Wildlife Tax Deferrals because the state can't support the program in our area. These deferrals provide important incentives for property owners to protect habitat over the long term by creating and implementing habitat plans. The program is also an educational tool for those who are learning about the values of these habitats, and for those who aren't sure how to best care for them. The program sends a strong signal to private property owners that the state values these habitats in practice -- not just with words.

Wildlife habitat requires maintenance -- invasive species like blackberry, ivy, and garlic mustard appear even in the most pristine areas and require ongoing work to remove.

Wildfire risk needs to be mitigated in habitat sensitive ways, adding a new burden.

Climate change is already killing native trees and endangering wildlife. We need more tools to help conserve and improve existing wildlife habitats and healthy headwater streams -- HB 2527 will make a valuable tool available again at little cost to the state.

Please support HB 2527.

Thank you for your consideration,

Carol Chesarek
President, Forest Park Neighborhood Association