

Submitter: Steven Ashley

On Behalf  
Of:

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

Measure: HB3179

March 30, 2023

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Re: Landowner Comments on House Bill 3179 & HB 3180

Dear Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Owens and Hartman, and Members of the Committee,

The undersigned are individual landowners that conduct agricultural and/or grazing operations on lands zoned as EFU in Oregon.

We are writing in support of House Bill 3179 and 3180 because we support both solar energy facility siting, and recognized that it should be particularly encouraged in places near powerlines and on lands which are less productive relative to other lands, particularly where access to water is challenged, or on more economically marginal or agriculturally less productive lands.

Often the land best suited for solar development is classified as EFU under the rules, which apply acreage jurisdictional and goal exception thresholds that are impractical relative to project costs and land availability relative to power lines, and thus restricts our ability (and solar developers' abilities) to even consider placing a solar energy facility on our property. That raises a fundamental question of landowner rights to make the best use of their land. We know our land and we know what land is agriculturally productive. And we understand that the existing land use system and transmission system capacity provide checks and balances.

We appreciate the economic diversity and benefits that renewable energy projects bring both to individual landowners and communities, including property taxes, jobs, and direct income for ranchers and farmers like us, including to help diversify our ranches economic opportunities and sources of income, and stabilize our revenues to help balance variations in the prices our crops and cattle get in the market, as well as how much our cost inputs can vary, especially fertilizer and diesel.

We appreciate that solar energy is a temporary land use that does not permanently remove the land from agricultural production – if the land could be productive in the future because water or other factors change, a solar facility does not remove that prospect. But we are not provided an opportunity to make that decision under the

existing laws and rules. We support the legislature expanding our abilities to do this, and make our own decisions about our own land, which we understand best, and view through a comprehensive and multi-generational perspective, as well as one balancing various uses, trade-offs and benefits. We want and need renewable energy and believe that this bill would encourage that opportunity while preserving the overall agricultural character of our communities, as well as enable our county permitting processes to balance these and other considerations under the current land use and solar permitting rules.

We urge you to pass HB 3180 and HB 3179.

Sincerely,  
Steven Ashley  
A&K Ranches  
Wasco County, OR