



P.O. Box 1083
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Helping to shape the use of our natural resources to protect the quality of life in Yamhill County

February 9, 2023

Sen. Jeff Golden, Chair, and Committee Members
Senate Committee on Natural Resources
State Capitol
Salem, Oregon

Re: SB 70 Houses on Eastern Oregon Farm Land

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Friends of Yamhill County (FYC) works to protect natural resources through the implementation of land use planning goals, policies, and laws that maintain and improve the present and future quality of life in Yamhill County for both urban and rural residents. We strongly oppose this bill which would change the language in SB 16 which narrowly passed in 2021. This language was integral to getting acceptance of the bill.

Farming and ranching are complex endeavors that rely on multiple factors beyond a simple soil classification. Crop selection, water availability, terrain, micro-climates, and market conditions can make or break an operation. Soil type, especially such a narrow one, would exclude many of the most productive lands from protection.

Value, like beauty, is in the eye of beholder. It took the pioneers of viticulture in Oregon to recognize the value of those hills with marginal soil and slopes not suited to flat ground scale equipment. Fortunately for Oregon they stepped up to get them protected within the Oregon Land Use Laws.

On a more personal note, as the fourth generation on a farm established by Swedish immigrants in 1891, I would like to share one of Dad's favorite stories about land value. The first wave of European settlers preferred bottom land with access to water. The second wave was predominantly Scandinavians and Germans and they farmed the low slopes and land without access to irrigation. The Dust Bowlers ended up with the hills suitable for prunes and walnut orchards, maybe running a few cattle. Then came the Wine Industry that sought those hills as ideal for vineyards. The Dust Bowlers sold out, and in some cases took their proceeds to buy flatland with water rights.

Friends of Yamhill County recognizes that agriculture is among the industries that have evolved and will continue to do so. Changing market conditions, like Covid impacts, are prompting rethinking of existing practices. To remove protections from lands that are currently productive and are likely to get more so in the future is short sighted. Especially so when there are ample options to site homes already in the region.

Ontario has quite a bit of land available for residential development. In 2008, Ontario established an urban reserve of about 2200 acres. Urban reserves are for the land need beyond the 20-year UGB, **IF** future growth is required. Between 2009-2014, Ontario expanded its UGB 3 times, bringing in about 600 acres from the urban reserve, consisting mostly of EFU lands and mostly for industrial use, but not entirely. That leaves about 1500 acres still available in the Ontario Urban Reserve, in addition to vacant residential lands already in the Ontario UGB. This illustrates that if there is a demand for homes, including higher end homes, outside of the immediate built-up area of Ontario, there are plenty of options.

Please retain the definition from the original bill and reject SB 70. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Jernstedt

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SB 70 FYC