



ORCA: Oregon Coast Alliance

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Protecting the Oregon Coast

April 15, 2013

Oregon State Senate
Judiciary Committee
State Capitol Building
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 713, Firearms Training Facilities on EFU land

Sent via email to Annola DeJong, Committee Administrator: annola.dejong@state.or.us

Dear. Sen. Prozanski and members of the Committee,

Oregon Coast Alliance (ORCA) is an Oregon nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect, conserve and restore coastal natural resources, and work with coast residents for sustainable communities.

ORCA opposes SB 713, which would add firearms training facilities as an allowed use on Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) land.

There is an important issue which will be reignited if this bill passes: a proposed firearms training facility on farmland in Tillamook County, a few minutes' drive from the City of Tillamook. ORCA opposed this firearms facility, and helped lead the fight against it. The Tillamook County Board of Commissioners, after a long battle, turned down the proposal in 2011 because firearms facilities are not an allowed use on EFU land, and the site in question is an old dairy farm, properly zoned for EFU use.

As firearms facilities are an allowed use on *forest* lands, the Board of Commissioners amended County code to allow firearms training on forest lands, but when proponents subsequently tried to rezone part of the dairy farm to forestland in a patent attempt to get the proposed firearms facility approved, the Board of Commissioners refused. The

criteria for EFU land are strict and clear, and there was no justifiable way of completing this rezone legally.

If firearms training facilities had been allowed on EFU land at that time, the facility proposed and supported by the Tillamook Shooters' Association would now be up and running. This would be a major problem for the dairy farmers in this quiet valley, whose animals would be disturbed by gunfire noise, and also the rural residents whose property values would plummet. Who would be interested in purchasing a lovely rural property, or a farm, subject to regular explosions of clearly audible gunfire?

The list of allowed nonfarm uses on EFU land is already too long; it should be kept to a minimum. Only uses closely related to farming and should be allowed on these lands. A firearms training facility has no place on EFU land; it is a completely unrelated and damaging use that affects noise levels, traffic and nearby property values.

Furthermore, many farmlands on the coast and in the Willamette Valley are near sloughs, streams and wetlands. Lead shot in waterways and wetlands is a serious ongoing problem in Oregon; many birds, including Federally protected trumpeter swans, die from lead poisoning. Once lead is in the waterways, it is very difficult to remove, and lead is of course poisonous to humans as well as animals. The state of Oregon has no requirement for lead containment at firearms facilities, nor oversight of any private lead recycling program. The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides only voluntary guidelines and Best Management Practices.

SB 713 is clearly a "special interest" bill proposed by and supported by gun clubs. There is a need in rural parts of the state for sites where firearms training can occur, but these should be carefully chosen by communities in areas where they will not disturb important economic activities or surrounding rural property owners' property values. In the Tillamook County case we have described, the Tillamook Shooters' Association had a lease on property owned by the Port of Tillamook Bay for its practice site. Most importantly, firearms training should not be added to the already unwieldy list of unrelated nonfarm uses permitted on EFU land.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in this matter.

Sincerely,

/s/ Cameron La Follette

Cameron La Follette
Land Use Director