

Good afternoon Clem and members of the committee:

My name is Brenda Frketich and I'm a third generation farmer from St. Paul. I farm 1000 acres alongside my husband Matt and our three small children. We raise filberts, grass seed, wheat, clover, vegetables and vegetables seeds.

I am here today in support of HB 2437. I am supporting this bill for a number of reasons.

- It helps alleviate some incredibly large issues with a workable solution
- It puts enforcement in the hands of the ODA
- It was drafted with all stakeholders at the table

I am here as a farmer, but also as a member of the GA Miller Drainage District. It is Ditch District No.1 and was formed in 1911. It was formed because farmers realized that in order to farm this amazing soil, they needed a way to allow for the land to drain. The ditch was hand dug in 1912 and 5 miles of that existing ditch is under our control today. We have just over a dozen landlords that we work with. Our authority is simply to make sure that the drainage ditch is flowing properly, which usually means maintaining the channel of the ditch. Currently this is done during the driest time of the year, usually because that's the only time that the ditch is accessible.

This district collects taxes from the landowners, assessed at a rate depending on how much land you own along the ditch. Assessments are then used to pay for the ditch cleaning every year. The landowners, and all the farmers who benefit from this drainage, expect this to occur and for the drainage to be maintained year to year.

A few years ago our ditch district was told that we needed a permit to do what we had been doing for over a century. We were then given a consent agreement to sign which would have cost us thousands of dollars to accomplish. We pushed back and after talking with Farm Bureau it was clear that this was an opportunity for a much larger conversation about historically maintained drainage ditches.

I believe that the best management practices spelled out in this legislation, show a true picture of what we already do in our ditch district to maintain these channels. It also creates a path for farmers to apply for a permit that is workable, renewable, and manageable. It allows for BMPs to be passed along for education, to make sure that we are doing all we can to protect our natural resources and our farmland.

It takes the enforcement out of the hands of the Department of State Lands and into the capable hands of the Department of Agriculture. A department who would have the ability to not only work diligently on the education portion, but also be sure that farmers are complying in ways that work with their drainage as far as timing and in special cases.

Lastly I want to be sure you understand that this legislation came from a true group effort of many stakeholders at the table. Many of which were able to come out to our farm and watch an actual ditch digging.

I hope that you as you look at HB 2437 you realize that this is a great place to create legislation that solves real problems for farmers in Oregon. Thank you.