

June 10, 2021

Oregon House Committee on Rules
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Smith Warner and House Committee on Rules members,

I urge you to oppose SB 16 as it would waive Oregon's land use laws by allowing up to 100 houses to be built on exclusive farm land in Malheur County.

Malheur County should have to follow Oregon's land use laws like the rest of us who live in rural areas of Oregon. SB 16 has been wrongly characterized by some as an urban/rural divide issue when in reality owners of farm and forest resource land want to see these lands protected from fragmentation and development.

Where I live in Wasco County, development has brought with it human caused wildfires which have threatened and destroyed areas of farm and forest land in recent years. Wildfires are a huge and growing concern in resource lands all across Oregon.

The owners of this land in Malheur County can go through their local planning commission if they believe they have a valid case for a rezone. They would then have the option of appealing to the Land Use Board of Appeals if denied. They should be making their case there, not here.

However, they are using some weak arguments. For example, they present the argument that the land is not farmland because it has not been farmed in the past 3 years. Current use is irrelevant. This is similar to the forestland owner who logs his trees then claims that the land is not good forest land because there are no trees on it and asks for a rezone. Current use doesn't change the land's value as resource land. Cutting trees or not farming doesn't change the soil type.

Spot zoning such as this request is to be avoided as it increases conflicts with surrounding resource uses and increases fire risk.

Malheur County can update its comprehensive plan and consider the county as a whole when doing so.

This appears to be nothing more than an end run around Oregon's land use laws, laws which the people of Oregon have upheld at the ballot box again and again.

The passage of this bill would be setting a precedent by telling people to bypass the land use process and instead go straight to the legislature. Everyone thinks their situation is unique and deserves an exception.

Does the legislature want to be the land use board for Oregon and arbitrarily bypass the land use planning that makes Oregon Oregon and that the majority of Oregonians support?

Please oppose SB 16.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Sheila Dooley
Mosier, Oregon