



March 1, 2023

Senate Committee on Natural Resources,  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

**Re: SB 644**

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Girod, and Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources,

Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is a conservation organization that, for more than 35 years, has protected Central Oregon’s forests and high desert, rivers and springs, fish and wildlife, and its vibrant communities. We work to conserve the region’s ecosystems, wildlife habitat, and working rural lands balanced with a responsible, sustainable approach to planning and fostering thriving communities.

We regret being unavailable to testify at this morning’s hearing, but provide these written comments on SB 644.

**LandWatch has a neutral position on SB 644, but we support the -2 amendments.** Wildfire risk was a primary consideration when the legislature considered and ultimately passed SB 391 in 2021, which gave counties the option to allow rural ADUs in some rural residential areas. SB 391 requires rural ADUs sited in high and extreme fire hazard areas to be constructed with fire resistant building materials and be surrounded by defensible space. Those are pragmatic requirements formed over the course of a years-long process to consider whether, where, and how to allow rural ADUs in the state.

The -2 amendments to SB 644 would require that, prior to the completion of statewide fire risk maps under SB 762, a county that elects to allow rural ADUs must require they be built with fire resistant materials and be surrounded by defensible space. LandWatch supports the -2 amendments.

Although the -2 amendments improve this bill, we remain neutral because rural ADUs should not be allowed until statewide wildfire risk maps are complete. Rural residential areas are inherently at higher risk of fire hazard because of their remote location – usually far away from firefighting services and closer to wildlands. Counties should know where the low, moderate, high, and extreme fire hazards areas overlap with rural residential areas within their borders before deciding where to potentially allow rural ADUs. If counties decide now where to allow rural ADUs, it could end up that all rural ADUs in a county are sited in high fire risk areas. Only





2843 NW Lolo Drive, Ste. 200 | Bend, OR 97703

Phone (541) 647-2930

[www.colw.org](http://www.colw.org)

when statewide fire hazard mapping is complete will counties be able to make informed choices about allowing rural ADUs in certain fire risk areas.

For these reasons, we remain neutral on SB 644, but support the -2 amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

Rory Isbell  
Staff Attorney & Rural Lands Program Manager  
Central Oregon LandWatch



WE DEFEND AND PLAN FOR CENTRAL OREGON'S LIVABLE FUTURE