



Mapleton Commercial Area Owners Association  
PO Box 434 - Mapleton, OR 97453 - 916-678-8165

March 12, 2025

Cynthia Mateos  
Mapleton Commercial Area Owners Association  
10700 Hwy 126, Mapleton, OR 97453

RE: Legislative Support for Mapleton Water District to Obtain Sanitary Authority

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Owens and Finger-McDonald, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water,

The Mapleton Commercial Area Owners Association (MCAOA) was established as a 509(a)2 public charity to provide wastewater service to the Mapleton downtown business district and neighboring mobile home park. This service allows our historic downtown core to exist as on-site wastewater treatment is not possible there. This past year, a piece of equipment broke that resulted in untreated effluent being discharged into the Siuslaw River for many months. While the part has been replaced, the MCAOA has \$0 left and several other pieces of equipment are about to fail.

Normally sanitary districts can seek grants and loans from the Clean Water SRF and USDA Rural Development among other sources to plan and replace failing infrastructure. For instance, our Mapleton Water District (MWD) is a special district publicly owned utility that provides drinking water to our community. Because they're a special district, they're able to access public funds to make the infrastructure improvements the district needs. But MCAOA is ineligible due to our 509(a)2 status and, due to our small service area of less than 25 hook-ups, we are unable to generate sufficient revenue to replace our failing system outright.

**Under existing state statutes, the fastest way for MCAOA to be able to obtain public funds to fix the system would take more than two years.** A new special district would need to be stood up for sanitary service; the new sanitary district could then merge with MWD as it would not be financially solvent alone; and then finally the MCAOA would dissolve and transfer its assets to the newly merged MWD. This two-year timeline is unacceptable to the public health and environmental risks we face when the system breaks down again.

We Need Your Help

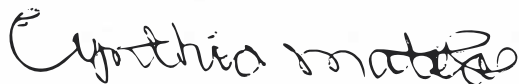
**A small legislative change to ORS 264.335 (public health) would be a much faster way to solve our sanitary treatment crisis.**

HB 3910 and the forthcoming-1 amendment will support the merge of the special districts in Mapleton and across the state to better manage our resources and serve our communities. The MCAOA and MWD Boards have unanimously voted to combine assets and services if given the opportunity. Without this change, there is no legal path for the MWD to provide sanitary services as such mergers are only allowed due to an urgent public health emergency or for communities recovering from the 2020 wildfires (i.e.: Blue River). The legislative change would allow the water district to also have sanitary authority. MCAOA could then dissolve and transfer its assets to MWD as early as this summer.

**Lane County has drafted policy change language to allow this and MCAOA is in full support of the proposed change.** It would help Mapleton's businesses and affordable housing keep their access to required wastewater service, lower operating costs for these services in the community, and most importantly, protect people in our community as well as Florence, Cushman, and Point Terrace, and native wildlife, from illnesses related to untreated effluent flowing into the Siuslaw River.

We think this small legislative change is imperative to the survival of our community, and protecting people and wildlife in the community and downstream. If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 916-678-8165. Thank you for considering this request from the MCAOA.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Mateos  
President, Mapleton Commercial Area Owners  
Association