

SAVE HELVETIA



13260 NW Bishop Rd

Hillsboro, OR 97124

February 9, 2026

*Advancing policies, leaders and actions that
protect Helvetia's treasured resources.*

Opposition to SB 1578

Save Helvetia is a private non-profit advocacy organization that has been working for over 15 years to protect farm and forestlands in Washington County. We organized in 2010 during the Urban and Rural Reserves planning process, studying lands in and around the Helvetia area, submitting testimony to Washington County, Metro, and LCDC. We studied the reserves laws and rules, submitting excellent "citizen science" regarding the area we lived and worked in. Our testimony was largely rebuffed at over 35 hearings. Still confident in our position, we joined several appellants taking it to the Oregon State Court of Appeals. The points we raised in testimony, along with 1000 Friends of Oregon, were eventually embraced by the court's ruling, which rejected and remanded Washington County's proposed urban and rural reserves plan. Oregon's world class soils are a resource to protect for future generations. We write to you in Opposition to SB 1578

This bill would allow rural counties to rezone up to 50 acres of agricultural or forest land for residential development at urban densities and without adhering to state lands laws. This bypasses Goal One, nullifying any citizen participation. Infrastructure costs are higher when disconnected to existing urban settings. Distance increases vehicular travel, likely without commensurate law enforcement. Such development would likely be disconnected to any tax-based transit system. Disconnected urban settings might pose a higher fire risk and be distant from adequate fire suppression, causing higher fire/insurance rates and availability. Cities already have avenues through which to expand and they can accomplish it with less expense. Existing law allows for housing for farm workers and families of farmers. Oasis of small urban densities might come into conflict with "right to farm" practices of farming and ranching, which urban dwellers sometimes find objectionable: spraying, dust, agricultural burning, odor, noise, early work hours etc.

Please oppose SB 1578.

Submitted, Save Helvetia