

Submitter: Glenn Fee
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1586

Tualatin Riverkeepers was founded in 1992 by a group of Washington County residents who came together to oppose a proposed west side bypass, which would have effectively created a version of I-205 throughout the heart of some of the richest farmland in the country. Our focus as a waterkeeper organization is to protect the Tualatin River watershed and to ensure clean, cold water for the health of all species. These founding members - many of whom are still active in the organization today - chose to create a water-focused organization because they intuitively knew that protecting water was critical to protecting these rich Washington County lands. So you can imagine the consternation and disbelief that hundreds of our members felt last month when they learned of yet another attempt to bring rural reserves into the urban growth boundary.

In the Tualatin River watershed, the destruction of areas like the farmland in question under SB 1586 results in warmer water temperatures, which are particularly harmful to our sensitive river system and the salmon that return to our waters to reproduce. The natural permeable surfaces that dominate rural reserves allow for the regular recharge of the water table and our groundwater reserves with every rain and snowfall. The streams, riparian areas, and wetlands hold surface water, offering flood resilience, slowing erosion, and filtering new water as it enters the watershed.

When rural reserves are converted to industrially zoned land as proposed in SB 1586, they are compacted, filled, and paved over with impermeable surfaces. This process permanently destroys wetlands and riparian areas, and often results in channelized or buried streams. This valuable wildlife habitat is gone forever. The runoff from the newly paved industrial sites and the roads connecting them will not only warm the waters of a river that is already on the precipice of being too warm for salmonids, it will undoubtedly contain the contaminant 6-PPDq that comes from tire dust. This contaminant, whose impacts are just now being understood, is acutely toxic to coho salmon, a protected species that is found in McKay Creek, which forms the western border of the 1,700 acre parcel.

We can't think about water without addressing water quantity. Just over a decade ago, out of concern for not having enough water for this rapidly growing region, the cities of Hillsboro and Beaverton, along with the Tualatin Valley Water District, invested in the Willamette Water Supply project, which will begin supplying drinking water to residents later this year. In the intervening decade since this project was conceived, the rapid residential growth and the addition of 30 data centers in and around Hillsboro has caused the demand for water to increase exponentially. We

simply do not have the water required to meet the demands that this expansion would bring.

SB 1586 would irrevocably destroy 1,700 acres of Oregon's richest farmland and important streams, wetlands, and riparian areas at a moment when we most need it. On behalf of the thousands of members and volunteers, many of them nearby residents of this land, I urge you to oppose this bill.