

HB 2437

Chair Clem and Members of Committee:

My name is George Pugh and I am here to urge the advancement of HB 2437.

As the 5th of 6 generations to operate our farm in the upper Willamette Valley I would like to make or reinforce 3 quick points:

1. We and our neighbors rely on surface ditches and small channels to make our heavy, clay soils produce economical seed crops. These ditches need periodic cleaning to help carry off the seasonal rains. For years we had not even realized that the Oregon Department of Lands had jurisdiction over what we saw as minor maintenance activity. Now that some enforcement by the Dept. of Lands has occurred we have found the process of securing the necessary permits both time consuming and expensive and not designed for our re-occurring activity. Some of my neighbors are still not aware of the regulations or don't have the time or resources to undertake the permit. A more stream-lined and affordable process would enable farmers a path for compliance.
2. A few years ago we cooperated in an Oregon State University study of the use made by fish of inundated flood plains. The portion on our farm was a winter flooded ditch that flowed in to the Calapooia River which is a tributary of the Willamette River. As an off-stream flooded area small juvenile fish made use of our flooded fields, to include zero year chinook fingerlings. They not only found shelter out of the main

stream but also food. As the water receded they would follow the ebbing waters back to the mainstream but inevitably some would be stranded in ponds. While not a conclusion of the study, I contend that our ditch-cleaning efforts facilitate the safe return of the fish to the mainstream.

3. The Oregon Dept. of Lands has bigger fish to fry. Moving the permitting and enforcement to the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture will be a major plus. The ODA knows the landscape and their clients. We in production agriculture are used to the ODA's place in our lives and respect their enforcement abilities. We feel their firm, even hand as they administer and enforce the many regulations that affect us now. We know they would administer the new responsibility in a similar manner.

Thank you for your attention and consideration. Please pass this bill to give us a path to clean our ditches.

George Pugh