

To: Chair Van Landingham and Members of the Commission Date: October 19, 2010

My name is Cherry Amabisca and I represent Save Helvetia. Save Helvetia is a coalition of farmers, business owners, and concerned citizens from throughout the region that supports preserving the Foundation Ag Land north of Highway 26.

Save Helvetia formed in the summer of 2009 when we were horrified to learn that most of the Helvetia area from the Sunset Highway into the Tualatin Mountains was requested by the City of Hillsboro as Urban Reserves and then recommended by Washington County's reserves advisory group as Urban Reserves. There's nothing like a big round "town center" circle stamped on the map over historic Foundation farmland to motivate people to action.

Then we learned that Washington County, unlike Clackamas and Multnomah Counties, had chosen NOT to include a significant number of citizens on their Reserves coordinating committee. We also learned that the Washington County Planning Directors meetings, where the factors were evaluated and reserves recommendations were formulated before being approved by the RCC, were closed to the public.

Being shut out of the planning and decision-making for such a monumental decision motivated many citizens. So, we documented the areas with Oregon white oaks and the areas used by elk. And we testified. A lot. From 10-year-old Mason Beinlich, who lives on a farm, to 87-year-old DeLoris Grossen, who farms 125 acres, we testified at hearings before Washington County, Metro and LCDC. 37 of our members testified at one or more hearings during the reserves process. But public testimony can't substitute for lack of citizens on the advisory committee and failure to allow citizens to attend the planning directors' meetings.

Don't worry - we aren't going to have 37 people testify this week! But, you *will* be hearing from us later about a few Washington County Urban Reserves that we believe should not be approved.

We believe that the urban and rural reserves decisions were well thought out in Multnomah County and Clackamas County and should be approved. The rural reserves designations in Washington County relied on solid data: The ODA agriculture map, the Natural Resources Map and the Oregon Department of Forestry's forest lands map, and those rural reserves should also be approved.

But some of Washington County's Urban Reserves designations do not reflect state policy and law. In the area north of Highway 26, for example, valuable farmland has been designated as Urban Reserves and the best buffers of freeways and floodplains have been eliminated and replaced with property lines, without considering the harm to adjacent farmland.

Urban Reserves are forever - we don't get a do-over. Urban Reserves never expire. We know that farmland in urban reserves isn't managed to its full potential, even if urbanization isn't imminent.

You have an opportunity to apply state policy and law to areas in Washington County that are lacking credible data to substantiate their urban reserve designation. By making a few thoughtful changes, you can make the reserves process a *regional* success.

Thank you for your time this week,

Cherry Amabisca, Steering Committee member, Save Helvetia
13260 NW Bishop Road, Hillsboro, OR 97124
(503) 647-5334 amabisca@helvetia.us