

Date: November 17, 2009

To: Washington County Board of Commissioners

From: Greg Mecklem, Pacific Crest Accoyo America

I farm and manage forest land in Helvetia and near Banks. I'm a member of the Washington County Farm Bureau BOD. I want to strongly urge you to place all lands in Helvetia north of Highway 26 into Rural Reserves. This morning I want to focus in particular on West Helvetia. This is a 1400 acre block of land directly north of the Sunset Highway, west of Helvetia Road and south of West Union Road. The Metro COO and the Joint State Agencies wisely recommend this area for protection in a Rural Reserve because it is Foundation Agricultural Land that meets all of the criteria for a Rural Reserve and provides a protective bulwark for a large block of Foundation Ag Land to the north, of which it is part. It has excellent buffers with the Sunset Highway on the south and Helvetia Road and Waibel Creek on the east.

A couple of speculative landowners have suggested placing the east part of the area in an Urban Reserve. The majority of landowners in this immediate area that live on and/or work this land support placing it in a Rural Reserve.

A small Urban Reserve in this area is a bad idea:

- 1) It would introduce an urban beachhead with no reasonable buffers into a large block of Foundation Ag land,
- 2) The suggested parcels have up to 30-35% Class I soils on the USDA Web Soil Survey, similar to adjacent parcels to the west and possibly the highest—that is, most productive—in Washington County.
- 3) Developing the west side of Helvetia Road will add more urban traffic to already-stressed rural roads, increasing conflicts for nearby farms on those roads and making it harder for them to continue to operate.
- 4) Developing any part of this area would sever the extensive subsurface tiling system that drains toward Waibel Creek causing flooding to upland adjacent farms and reducing their productivity.
- 5) The east border is in a flood plain—Waibel Creek floods at three areas almost annually between the Sunset and West Union Roads.
- 6) There's an important Native American cultural site at the southernmost edge and a burial ground at the northern edge.

This area does not meet Urban Reserve Factor 8—it can't be designed to avoid or minimize adverse effects on farm and forest practices. It will disrupt drainage systems and add spillover traffic using rural roads to avoid traffic on Hwy 26.

This area is important Foundation Agricultural Land and meets all of the criteria for a Rural Reserve. Please join with the Metro COO Michael Jordan and the Joint State Agencies and give it the long term protection as a Rural Reserve that it deserves.