



April 17, 2023

Deschutes County Board of County Commissioners
Deschutes County Planning Commission
c/o Nicole Mardell, Senior Planner
Deschutes County Community Development Department
117 NW Lafayette Ave
Bend, Oregon 97703

RE: robust community support for the Deschutes County Comprehensive Plan update to incorporate policies that protect wildlife and open space, preserve agricultural land, and protect natural resources.

Dear Board of County Commissioners and Planning Commission,

We undersigned organizations, whose membership includes thousands of Deschutes County residents, are concerned about the trajectory of our county. Over the past decade, we've watched as wildlife populations have dwindled, water tables have dropped, rural and agricultural lands have been developed into luxury housing, open spaces have been lost, and accelerating climate change continues to exacerbate all of these issues. In response, we have come together to deliver a joint message to the County: Deschutes County should change course. It should do so by updating its comprehensive plan to incorporate the following points:

- **Protect Wildlife, Biodiversity, and Open Space**
 - o Protect our regions biodiversity, and proactively respond to dwindling wildlife populations in our region
 - o Protect wildlife by using the best available data to update all wildlife habitat inventories
 - o Prioritize preservation of open space in Deschutes County
 - o Value trees for their climate change mitigation and ecosystem value

- **Preserve Agricultural Land**
 - o Keep agricultural lands zoned for farm use, including dry rangeland, by ending spot zoning
 - o Keep agricultural land priced for farmers
 - o Encourage conservation and efficiency improvements and encourage equitable water distribution to provide sufficient irrigation water for commercial farmers

- **Protect the Region’s Strained Water Resources:**
 - o Maintain groundwater data and limit new development in areas with declining groundwater levels
 - o Help upgrade infrastructure for water delivery and use, to benefit agricultural water users and to place more water instream for fish and wildlife habitat
 - o Require water conservation in new development and property improvements

- **Protect Communities from Wildfire:**
 - o Ensure wildfire safe communities and reduce risk to firefighters, by protecting current development and limiting future development in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

- **Support Housing Affordability and Availability Inside our Cities**
 - o Work with cities to plan for and produce needed affordable housing inside urban growth boundaries, including planning for future growth

- **Address Emerging Trends**
 - o Integrate a response to climate change throughout the comprehensive plan
 - o Plan for renewable energy facility development while also protecting open space, wildlife, and agricultural lands
 - o Appropriately resource County code compliance and enforce existing laws

Deschutes County has a responsibility to its residents to safeguard its wildlife, working lands, and natural resources—we look forward to the County’s use of this comprehensive plan update to meet this obligation by incorporating the above values.

Sincerely,

Rory Isbell
 Rural Lands Program Manager
 Staff Attorney
 Central Oregon LandWatch

Greg Holmes
 Rural Lands Policy Director
 1000 Friends of Oregon

Lindsey Hardy
 Energy & Waste Programs Director
 The Environmental Center

Michael O’Casey
 Deputy Director, Pacific Northwest Region
 Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Mary Fleischmann
 Leader
 Central Oregon Bitterbrush Broads
 Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Gretchen Valido & Mathieu Federspiel
 Chair & Vice Chair
 Juniper Group
 Sierra Club

Sally Compton
Executive Director
Think Wild

Diane Hodiak
Executive Director
350Deschutes

Bret Campbell & Dick Kellogg
Friends of the Metolius

Rick Martinson
Executive Director
Worthy Environmental

Eva Eagle
Oregon Land & Water Alliance

Suzanne Linford
Protect Animal Migration