

PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

**710 acres of agricultural land saved from sprawling development;
LandWatch's appeal of controversial decision to rezone farmland prevails at LUBA**

On July 28, 2023, Oregon's Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) ruled in favor of Central Oregon LandWatch's appeal of Deschutes County's controversial decision to approve a developer's application to rezone 710 acres of agricultural land in the Lower Bridge Valley for development.

This decision will preserve the vast, open landscapes and rolling hillsides that support regional agricultural economies and provide welcome habitat for wildlife.

"LUBA agreed that Deschutes County's decision was inconsistent with Oregon's long-standing protections for farm and forest land. We are grateful that these 710 acres continue to be protected under statewide planning Goal 3," says Staff Attorney Carol Macbeth.

Alongside our co-petitioners at Oregon's Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD), Keystone Ranch, Judge Paul Lipscomb, and Redside Ranch, LandWatch went to LUBA because we believe the County's approval violates Oregon's laws designed to protect farmland for farm use and direct growth inside urban growth boundaries.

By strictly limiting housing on farmland, the laws are intended to keep prices low enough for farmers to buy land or expand their operations. As farmland across the country hits record-high prices, it is more important than ever to defend agricultural properties so working farmers and ranchers are not priced out by land with artificially increased value based on speculative development.

The Lower Bridge Valley is recognized by Deschutes County as a highly productive agricultural area. Here, thriving farms and ranches produce an array of local food and products, like award-winning wines and fresh produce you'll find around Central Oregon's farmers' markets, restaurants, and grocery stores.





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Converting this land to sprawling suburban development would have profoundly altered this agricultural region, adding additional strain to working farms, rural infrastructure, groundwater resources, and wildlife.

“The proposed subdivision threatened neighboring farms and ranches. LUBA's decision is good news for wildlife, as these 710 acres have been identified by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife as essential mule deer and elk habitat,” added Macbeth.

For over 36 years, Central Oregon LandWatch has worked tirelessly to ensure critical rural values remain an abiding part of our livable future. This ruling is an unambiguous win for agricultural livelihoods, wildlife, open space, and rural lands.

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We defend and plan for Central Oregon's livable future