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PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

A win to protect rural lands from industrial development; LUBA remands County decision to approve industrial uses near Deschutes Junction.

On Friday, June 18, the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals issued a remand of Deschutes County's previous decision to approve industrial development near Deschutes Junction.

This area, located between Bend and Redmond, is zoned for rural land use, which limits commercial and industrial development. The stretch between the two Central Oregon towns is primarily populated with farms, agricultural land, and rural residential areas.

Earlier this year, Deschutes County approved a proposal to rezone this property for industrial uses. The proposed industrial zone consists of a constellation of manufacturing uses, including plastics and paper manufacturing, metal fabrication, petroleum storage and distribution, and more.

In February, Central Oregon LandWatch challenged this decision by Deschutes County to convert rural land into industrial use, concerned over the effects the decision could have on the surrounding environment and neighboring farming communities.

LandWatch was particularly concerned that the proposal did not evaluate the impact on the surface groundwater from potential industrial waste. Furthermore, the industrial uses in this zone are fundamentally incompatible with the surrounding farms, mixed-use agricultural areas, and rural landscapes. The decision would have set a precedent for converting rural lands across the County, resulting in a loss of wildlife habitat and open space.

Central Oregon LandWatch prevailed in LUBA's decision, resulting in continued protections for rural land against industrial development across Deschutes County. LUBA decided the County was unable to show that rural lands would not be converted to urban uses.

According to LandWatch's Executive Director Ben Gordon, "With ample land and infrastructure to meet industrial needs within the urban growth boundaries of Central Oregon's cities, LUBA's ruling ensures rural communities, which lack the infrastructure to safely support industrial uses such as plastics manufacturing and petroleum storage, won't have to shoulder this unnecessary burden."

As the watchdog for Oregon's land use system, LandWatch will continue to hold strong to its values to protect rural landscapes, wildlife, and clean water.

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