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**Planning Commission
Washington County
Hillsboro, Oregon**

**Hearing on Ordinance 740
Soils, Hydrology, and Exposure of the Helvetia Acreage**

We have sought to educate the Washington County BOCC and the DLUT re the reserves factors and in regards to the acreage between NW Helvetia Road and NW Jackson School Road, south of NW West Union Road, and north of the Sunset Highway. This includes 585 acres and under proposed Ordinance 740, it is called Area D.

We have found agreement that these lands are relatively flat, close to Hillsboro, and relatively close to the Sunset Highway/Cornelius Pass. That is where our agreement stops. We understand that these acres have been in the development cross hairs of Hillsboro, development interests, and Washington County. They would stand to gain financial benefit from the development of these acres. While they envisage “home run” campuses similar to Intel, our research indicates that the past 15 years of development shows that this is unlikely. Smaller corporate offices are now required and with off-shore fabrication across the Pacific. But financial gain in itself is **not what the reserves factors and resulting designations are about.** **Protection of high value farmland is also part of the equation.**

We have shown that, although these acres are parcelized, these acres remain easily farmable and without conflict. Excellent profits have been made on these acres and the farmers are able to transition between crops in relation to the market. Current farming practices are “green” with perennial grass crops not requiring annual tillage, saving fuel, minimizing dust, and reducing water evaporation.

The county would have you believe that because these lands are outside of the Tualatin Valley Irrigation District, they are somehow second class to those lands that are within the district. With climate warming, they would have you believe that these acres will all but dry up. **But wait!** While the

farming approach is referred to as “dry-land” farming, these acres enjoy plentiful and natural sub-irrigation from the Tualatin Mountains to the north, with the prevailing weather pattern bringing rains from the south to the highlands of Helvetia. There is an excess of water resources that drains south to the valley floor below, causing farmers to have tiled these fields over the last century, shunting off the excess water into the creeks. We have our hydrological profile on the record before Washington County, Metro, and DLCDC. You can come to my land, now, and with a shovel, strike water within 8 inches of the surface. In August and September, you can still find water draining from the farm tiling as it reaches the roadside ditches and creeks. Why obliterate these precious water resources and tiling infrastructure that build upon naturally occurring resources, and without the tremendous tax investments now being required for a new Scoggins Dam?

The Helvetia silt loam soils in this area are the results of the multiple “pondings” of the Tualatin Basin and approximately 10,000 years ago, during the Missoula flood processes. These are the fine top soils scoured from Idaho and Eastern Washington that went south into the Willamette Valley, and then poured into the Tualatin Valley over the Tonquin Scablands and through the Wapato gap south of Gaston. You can come to my land and dig and dig and you will not find a rock within 6 feet of the surface. In fact, the acreage between NW Helvetia Road and to NW Jackson School Road, and between the NW West Union Road and the Sunset Highway, **comprises 40 percent of the remaining class one agricultural soils in all of Washington County!** You have access to the same federal website that we do. Check for yourselves.

<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.dov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

The **farming miracle of Helvetia** results from the unique combination of excellent soils, natural and man-made slopes and drainages, excellent water resources with the Helvetia highlands acting as a catch basin for rain waters draining to the southern lowlands, the southern exposure to the sun with little shading, and the ingenuity of the generations of farmers and the Atfalati Indians who manicured the area before them. Warmth, water, soil, drainage, and ingenuity makes for excellent agricultural lands. Crops here get a **head start** every spring.

Respectfully,

Robert Bailey, for SaveHelvetia.org