

House passes key jobs bill protecting agriculture, forestry

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. — The Oregon House on Tuesday passed House Bill 2227, which protects Oregon farms and forest land in order to preserve jobs in Oregon. The bill updates land use rules for siting destination resorts. By clearly separating farms and forest land from resorts, the new rules help protect natural resource jobs while giving more flexibility to resorts in some rural counties.

“Agriculture and forestry are historically important sectors of our economy,” said Nolan. “Oregon’s heritage is based on the land, and our state’s future depends on protecting the land for employment and enjoyment.”

Income from all Oregon agriculture related components totaled \$12 billion in 2007. Agricultural products are our 3rd most valuable export. Forest land generates about \$12.6 billion annually, about 7% of the state’s economy, and forest products and services employ more than 85,000 people directly in Oregon. However, the state lost 100,000 farm land acres from 2004 to 2005, and more acres are lost every year.

“This bill will greatly reduce the number of lost acres and lost farm jobs every year,” said Representative Brian Clem (D-Salem). “This land should be preserved for farming, timber and the people who work in these industries.”

HB 2227 authorizes the Land Conservation Development Commission to study and update requirements for county approval of destination resorts. It also allows the Commission more leeway in working with counties to adapt requirements for resort approval. Finally, HB 2227 declares destination resorts are for overnight accommodations for tourists, not residential use.

“When land that is ideal for farming or forestry is converted to sub-divisions it is gone forever, and with it part of our state’s history and natural wonder,” said Nolan. “We can have productive farms and a vibrant timber economy at the same time as exquisite resorts. This bill gives us both.”

HB 2227 was developed through an intensive public process that included work groups and public hearings in Salem and Central Oregon.

House passes key jobs bill protecting agriculture, forestry by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources