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Multnomah County
Planning Commission
1600 NE 190th Ave.
Portland, OR 97233

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Dear Planning Commission:

Having served on both the Metro Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) for the North Tualatin Mountains Comprehensive Plan and Multnomah County's Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for its Comprehensive Plan update, I would like to give you my perspective on an important, and now controversial, issue brought to the attention of the Planning Commission by the Metro Comments of May 2.

Metro would like to strike "to ensure wildlife connectivity" from the description of its 1,000 acres near the northern end of Forest Park (the North Tualatin Mountains acquisition property) and add "...and create opportunities for county residents to enjoy nature."¹

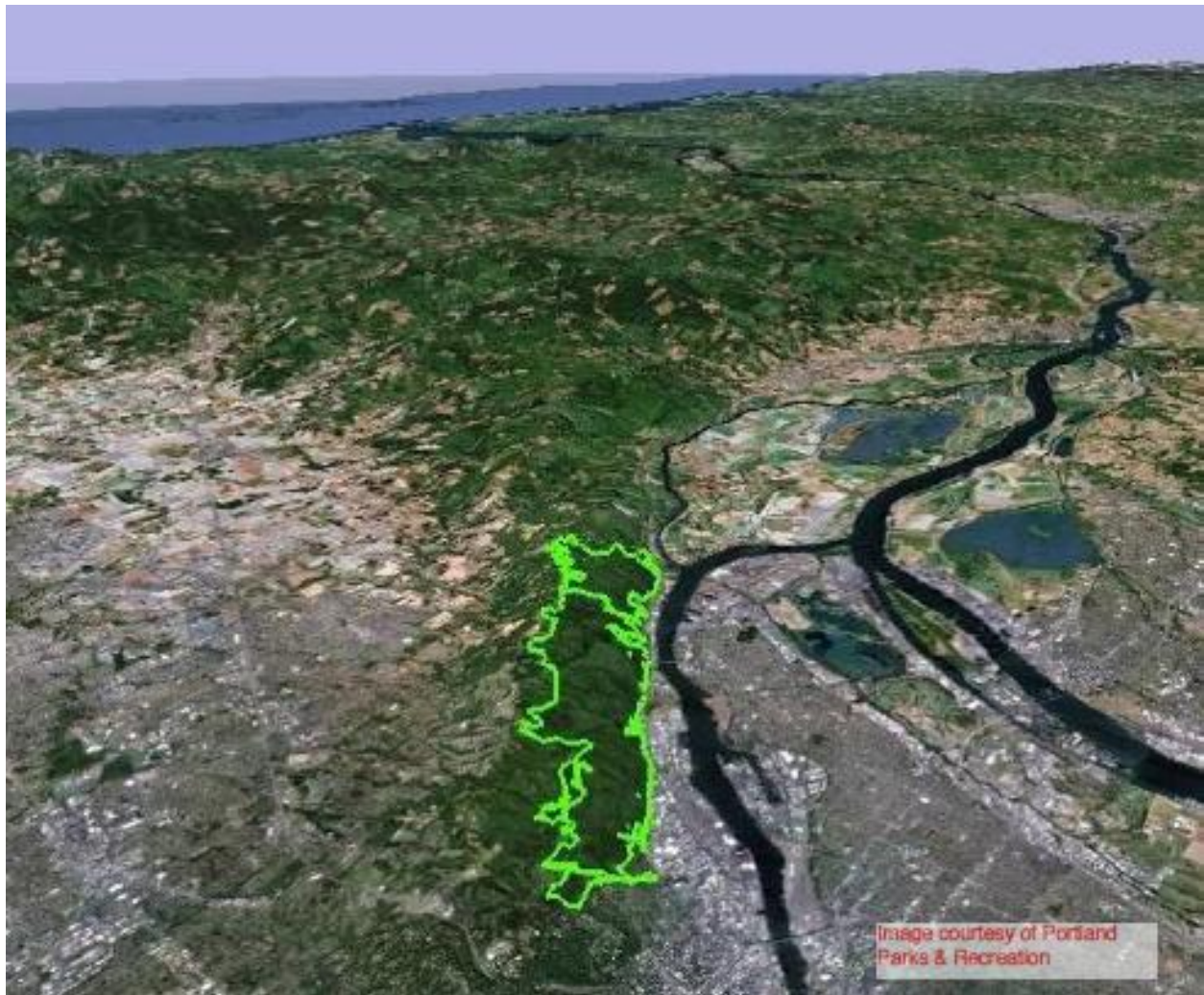
The Multnomah County CAC chose the language "to ensure wildlife connectivity" after due consideration. Of course Metro should be able to describe its own reasons for purchasing the North Tualatin Mountain properties, and the Planning Commission may want to recommend alternative language. But we wanted to make sure that the Multnomah County Comp Plan reflects that one of the central reasons for preserving the natural areas north and west of Forest Park is to preserve the wildlife corridors and connections that the West Hills area has to the Coast Range and its wildlife habitat.

The tension between wildlife connections and recreation was a common theme in the deliberations of Metro's Tualatin Mountains SAC. There were arguments to build trails and facilities for all sorts of users, accommodating dogs to horses to mountain bikes. In the end the SAC recognized the need to preserve significant habitat, while providing limited public access. The final recommendation of the SAC was to prohibit all trails on the Abbey Creek tract, allow one trail on the Ennis Creek property only as a connecting piece of a proposed regional trail, allow hiking and biking access to the McCarthy Creek site's existing logging road loop, and allow several multi-user trails to be constructed in the Burlington Creek site.² Building trails and providing public access to the latter was judged to be less

¹ See Metro's May 2, 2016 comments to the Planning Commission, page 2, final paragraph

² Note: This brief description of the SAC recommendations largely contradicts Metro's comment that "the public lands located in the Tualatin Mountains include a large and

damaging to wildlife and wildlife corridors partly because the Burlington site is already compromised by a road system built for maintenance of the BPA power lines, and partly because it was perceived to be outside (to the east of) the important wildlife corridors. I would like to note that the Metro SAC sought no guidance from Multnomah County in planning for these natural areas. I believe that it is important that when it comes time for Metro to seek permits from the county for its land use decisions in the North Tualatin Mountains, there should be language in the Multnomah Comprehensive Plan that provides guidance. And the language of our Comp Plan should clearly state that the natural areas of the West Hills should be preserved, and their habitat and wildlife connections to the Coast Range should be protected.



The Metro properties are located on the photo above at the north end of Forest Park (outlined), within the narrow forested neck that connects Forest Park and the rural lands

extensive network of interconnected trails, providing access to nature for all County residents." See *Explanation* on Page 3, Metro comments of May 2.

of western Multnomah County to the larger habitats of the Coast Range. These are the habitat lands that are important to preserve in order to maintain those wildlife connections that are critical to the continued health of this narrow peninsula of habitat that extends into Portland. It is only because these connections remain intact that we have elk herds, bear, mountain lions and other iconic species in western Multnomah County, as well as the many plants and animals that provide continual renewal and a healthy ecosystem to this area.

While the Metro SAC also recognized the importance of some public access to these lands, we understood that it would have to be limited in scope in order to preserve those connections. I am concerned that Metro's comments to the Planning Commission seek to tip the balance in favor of greater access and more recreational opportunities.

Without a strong statement in the Comprehensive Plan about the importance of habitat preservation and wildlife connectivity, the North Tualatin Mountains acquisition properties may eventually look like other Metro parks, where access to and recreation in "natural" areas are high priorities. We should be very careful about our approach to access and recreation here, at the choke point between Forest Park and the Coast Range. Much more than the four Metro properties is at risk. All of the habitat lands to the south could be cut off from their lifeline to the Coast Range by injudicious land use decisions on these Metro properties.

Thank you.

Jerry Grossnickle