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Metro's North Tualatin Mountains Land Use Application

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Dear Mr. Cook,

I am writing to express strong support for Metro's nature park plans for the North Tualatin Mountains in Multnomah County. I reside with my husband and two sons on a 21-acre property that is adjacent to McCarthy and Ennis Creek. Family horseback rides on these lands are a treasured pastime for my family and other people in our community.

In 2015, I began attending Metro's community meetings where I and hundreds of other people were encouraged to provide input towards development of the master plan for development of nature areas in the North Tualatin Mountains. To my dismay, the early development plans excluded equestrian use. For decades, the equestrian community has been forced to contend with ever-shrinking access to riding trails close-in to Portland. I decided to work with Metro and the equestrian community to ensure that horse-riding would continue to be permitted in these public lands. Metro staff gave us the opportunity to present our concerns, they were open-minded and receptive to our input. I was so pleased to see that the final plans now include equestrian access.

My interactions with Metro staff impressed me greatly. I appreciated their willingness, eagerness even, to receive public input. Metro scientists are knowledgeable and deeply committed to conservation measures that are appropriately balanced with the secondary and very important goal of accommodating public access to nature. Metro's protection of hundreds of acres of upland forest and several miles of stream corridors in the North Tualatin Mountains will significantly benefit fish and wildlife and protect water quality. At the same time, park improvements that include parking, a restroom, natural surface trails, bridges and wayfinding signs will expand opportunities for people to walk, hike, mountain bike and ride their horse, as they experience and enjoy nature close to home.

Recently, I was most surprised to learn that plans to move forward with improvement plans for Burlington Creek were at a standstill due to opposition from residents in my neighborhood along McNamee Road. I want to share my perspective on this opposition because of my first-hand knowledge of its root cause which is as follows: Late in 2015, I was invited to a meeting hosted by a McNamee homeowner to participate in a discussion on Metro's plans to develop the nature areas for public use. On arriving at the meeting, I learned its purpose was to oppose any development of these lands for public use. Neighbors at the meeting argued that these lands should remain as they always have, accessible only by people who live next to them. They were especially concerned that mountain bikers are going to come in droves and intrude on their peace and quiet, but from what I could tell, the main goal of the people at the meeting was to oppose all public access to these lands. A conservation activist was also present at that meeting to share ideas on how to oppose Metro and thwart efforts to develop the nature areas. One idea put forth was to advocate for protection of a resident elk herd and frogs. The reasoning was that it would be easier to gain sympathy for elk protection that it is to gain sympathy for a few families on McNamee who don't want public lands in their backyard to be accessible by the public. I was quite shocked at their willingness to say they were protecting wildlife while acknowledging they really care most about keeping the public away.

I encourage Multnomah County to authorize Metro's land use application over opposition from some residents in my community for all of the following reasons:

- These lands are public lands and not the private backyard of a privileged few.
- Metro conducted an open and transparent planning process and is responding to community needs and desires for recreation while also protecting nature
- With public access some impacts to natural resources are expected, however the health, social and economic benefits and long term conservation outcomes are vital to the quality of life we enjoy in the region
- Recently, I started to lease my horses and I now have a small number of customers who are able to enjoy nature from the back of a horse for a very affordable monthly fee. Horse riding opportunities close-in to Portland are increasingly in short supply. Several barns in our area have closed in the past two years as urban expansion has

Exhibit D.84

made land too expensive for keeping horses. For two of my lessees, horse-back riding is the only way they access and enjoy nature trails

- I often hear gunshots in the fall. Opportunities for illegal hunting will be minimized when more people are visiting the nature areas. I also look forward to seeing the increased presence of Metro staff who will be responsible for managing the nature areas when development is complete and the public begins to use them regularly.

I am enthusiastic to support Metro's plans for natural resource protection while meeting community needs for recreation. I urge Multnomah County to approve this worthy and important project.

Sincerely,

April Gutierrez

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