



BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS OREGON

RE: Transaction #63509-LS

Central Oregon Chapter of the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, adamantly oppose the sale of State Lands, AKA known as Tax Lots 5101, 5102, 5103, 5104, 5200, and 5300.

Dear State Lands Board,

Today, I'm contacting you in opposition of the potential DSL sale, of Tax Lots 5101-5104, 5200 and 5300, to the Central Land and Cattle Co., LLC. The Oregon Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on the proposed DSL sale of 400 acres, in central Oregon.

Founded in 2004 around an Oregon Campfire, BHA leads the nation as a public-lands advocacy organization. BHA members work in tandem with many of Oregon's conservation partners, public agencies and most have spoken in opposition to this sale.

What's proposed?

- 1,425 dwelling units, including 900+ permanent, 425 overnight and 50 room Hotel.
- Three 18-hole golf courses
- 20 Acre water ski lake
- Ten-fold increase in vehicle traffic on Highway 126 and Cline Falls Road, at completion.

Why this Matters: *Many of our conservation partners and the general public oppose this sale.*

The land in question is considered by the Oregon Dept of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to be "Biological Wintering Grounds" for mule deer--this land is extremely important to deer survival. The area is also home Elk and many other species of wildlife including birds – most occupying it year-round¹.

Mule deer populations have been in steep unrelenting decline for the last two decades in central Oregon. So much so it's been the subject of local and statewide media over the last few years. Why the decline? In large part this is due to loss of wildlife habitat at an appalling and frightening rate, along with other human pressures. When the habitat is gone, it is gone forever, along with all the wildlife which rely upon these critical lands.

Perhaps most important is the one thing all life requires - WATER. Less than 2 months ago, ODFW expressed very deep concerns with the 1200 Acre resort meeting its previously required and agreed mitigation requirements. ODFW's concern has only grown as the drought worsens. To add an additional of 400 acres of public land to the project in spite of ODFW's warning would be unconscionable^{1,2}.



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The Thornburgh Resort reached an agreement over water use with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) in 2008. The resort claimed it would rely on certain cold-water sources. However, it appears that those water sources may no longer be available. To protect fish and wildlife, the County requires the resort to either: 1). Demonstrate that the terms of the original fish and wildlife mitigation plan are still in place, or 2). If the water sources have changed, the County must require the resort to reach a new agreement with ODFW to show that any negative impact on fish and wildlife resources from the new water sources will be completed mitigated.

To also ignore the lessons which the state should be learning from the third-year of severe drought declarations, there are extremely serious water issues unfolding in many central and eastern Oregon counties. A resort of this magnitude impacting groundwater would be an egregious disregard for ecological and human welfare, after looking at the Governor's own drought declarations⁴.

Some Key Points:

- Water use has been projected to utilize, at a minimum, 1,628 gallons per minute (GPM), or approximately 100,000 gallons per hour (GPH), or 2,344,320 gallons of groundwater per day (GPD); up to 3,538 GPM, or 212,000 GPH or 5,094,720* GPD. And, approved up to 6 million GPD. *This is nearly 2 Billion Gallons of groundwater Per Year.
- Climate and Population changes since the original proposal in 2008, have resulted in hundreds of wells having gone dry, or being drilled deeper, as the central Oregon aquifer dropping due to various impacts on the very source of ground-water we all rely on for drinking water³.
- Deschutes County Code requires destination resorts to prove that "any negative impact on fish and wildlife resources will be completely mitigated so that there is no net loss or net degradation of the resource." DCC 18.113.070(D). There is little doubt that removing immense amounts of water from the Deschutes River, Whychus Creek, and the aquifer will hurt fish and wildlife, and domestic well water resources.
- A recent study, published February 14, 2022, outlined the worsening drought is very unlikely to resolve, and potentially will get worse for the next thirty years⁵. Some climate researchers have stated the Cascade Range could be snowless by 2050.

In Closing:

Many citizens and organizations from central Oregon are in opposition to this resort development that will benefit few, at a great cost. The cost in water resources; the cost in increased wildlife-vehicle-collisions; the increase in vehicle traffic; vs. a marginal benefit for few that can afford this, in a time of heightened housing crisis, water shortages and loss of wildlife habitat and connectivity should far outweigh any benefits that can't be reversed, once put in place. This sale just doesn't add up. Wrong place, Wrong time.



Respectfully submitted,

Karl J. Findling

Habitat Ambassador, and Board Member,

Oregon Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Sources:

1. ODFW Correspondence, January 3, 2022. RE: Comments for the Deschutes Co, January 4, Public Hearing RE: Plan Approval for Phase A-2 and Site Plan Review for Thornburgh Destination Resort.
2. Water Management and Conservation Plan. Prepared for Pinnacle Utilities, LLC, Thornburgh Resort, Redmond, OR October, 2020. Prepared by: Water Right Services, LLC. John A. Short CCB#197121
3. Public Comments, Central Oregon informed Angler-<https://coinformedangler.org/2022/02/07/even-wells-next-to-the-deschutes-river/>
4. https://apps.wrd.state.or.us/apps/WR/drought_dashboard/Default.aspx
5. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-022-01290-z.epdf?sharing_token=3zKLX-7bXyQElaZ4TMYz99RgN0jAjWel9jnR3ZoTv0OkweMbawmVFM1UCLmLxuyBpGKtFJa1_BxzJ7UFQSQZ6HoKWiVpxr-PXXpBdXS0aLLO4WyZCkgZ0O-MJUdLuS9OG38XSrC5T0H8liGFu8TaUIMyl6ctyB6YYWKSwfPQDbdDyScaelNX0uVfmtxbGB1GgYOS-oAWX6lbSao5RM2GWA%3D%3D

Other Sources: <https://www.opb.org/article/2022/03/16/race-to-the-bottom-how-big-business-took-over-oregons-first-protected-aquifer/>
<https://www.opb.org/article/2022/01/08/drought-stricken-oregon-farmers-embark-on-water-bank-pilot/>

<https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-harney-county-water-crisis-hay-farming/>

<https://www.npr.org/2022/02/14/1080302434/study-finds-western-megadrought-is-the-worst-in-1-200-years>

<https://www.drought.gov/states/oregon>

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