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**Rebecca Messinger**

**From:** Kathleen Otto  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 29, 2024 9:58 AM  
**To:** Rebecca Messinger  
**Subject:** FW: Clark County Loss of Agriculture and Timber production to unwarranted covenants



**Kathleen Otto**  
County Manager

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**From:** Clark County Citizens United, Inc. <cccuinc@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 28, 2024 6:38 PM  
**To:** Gary Medvigy <Gary.Medvigy@clark.wa.gov>; Karen Bowerman <Karen.Bowerman@clark.wa.gov>; Michelle Belkot <Michelle.Belkot@clark.wa.gov>; Glen Yung <Glen.Yung@clark.wa.gov>; Sue Marshall <Sue.Marshall@clark.wa.gov>; Kathleen Otto <Kathleen.Otto@clark.wa.gov>  
**Subject:** Clark County Loss of Agriculture and Timber production to unwarranted covenants

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Clark County  
Council  
P.O. Box 5000  
Vancouver, Washington 98666

February 28, 2024

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD AND THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

**Re: Clark County Loss of Agriculture and Timber production to unwarranted covenants**

Dear Councilors,

The membership of Clark County Citizens United, Inc. is asking the critical question of whether, as a county, we are willing to accept the loss of potentially thousands of acres of rural land to unwarranted wetland status, unwarranted mitigation and unwarranted permanent covenants? CCCU's membership has been beating the drum for some time and has warned that such losses endanger private property rights, endanger land values, endanger property taxes and buildable land supplies, needed for critical housing and zoned land uses, legally adopted in Comprehensive Plans.

Citizens have made substantial purchases in order to own this land. Financial institutions have justified loans based on certain values and truths about these lands. If the zoned uses of the land are subject to random changes that diminish the land's function and value, such losses endanger the central pillars of land ownership. This puts the American Dream at risk, while compromising banking and loan institutions.

Clark County should not tolerate the on-going, acceleration of the loss of small family farming and timber operations via onerous county regulations. As the loss of zoned land uses mount, and are replaced with restrictive covenants and unreasonable plantings, these family farms are forced to shut down. Rural populations in Clark County have already been shown to have less than 1% growth. This is far below the 10% rural growth allocation approved in the policy assumptions in the current Comprehensive Plan. The majority of timber in the county consists of small family woodlots.

According to the **2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, Clark County Profile, Table 8;**

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- **Clark county has 1,927 farms.**
- **824 farms are 1-9 acres in size.**
- **Nearly 43% of Clark County farms are small family operations of 10 acres or less.**

While the impacts on rural Clark County housing are significant in themselves, everyone in the county will feel the ripples from the rural land squeeze. Here are questions that demand answers:

- **How much land has been removed from production, by farms of all scales, and converted to permanent covenants requiring unreasonable plantings?**
- **How much rural land may be potentially removed from production and replaced with dedicated covenants and thousands of plantings?**
- **How much rural land is currently held by Clark County with permanent covenants recorded on deeds?**
- **How do policies and regulatory actions play detrimental roles affecting zoned land uses that affect private property rights?**
- **Why has there not been any action by staff over the ongoing threats to land for rural housing, agricultural and timber productivity?**
- **Why is the loss of rural land that's being converted to permanent covenants not included in any buildable lands report?**

Staff has been moving with reckless speed to divert much rural land to unwarranted permanent covenants. There's been no analysis, no warning concerning the impacts to legally adopted zoned land uses, property rights, losses to agricultural, timber productivity and loss to buildable rural land supplies needed to meet housing demands. It appears rural private properties are viewed as "unused" sites for potential housing and industrial developments. The county's faulty designations of wetlands and unwarranted demands for permanent covenants undermines adopted local planning goals and land use zoning regulations. The council must review these policies and find a practical solution to this problem.

This question must be asked of the policy makers. Is anyone going to answer the alarm, before it is too late?

Sincerely,

Susan Rasmussen, President

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