



TUALATIN RIVERKEEPERS.

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November 19, 2021

Board of County Commissioners
Washington County
155 N. First Ave
Hillsboro, OR 97124

Submitted via email

Re: Consider Adding Gas/Fuel Station Setbacks to Municipal Code

Chair Harrington and Commissioners:

Tualatin Riverkeepers (TRK) is a community-based organization that protects and restores the Tualatin River watershed. We build watershed stewardship through engagement, advocacy, restoration, access, and education. We write today to urge the Board of Commissioners to take steps to better protect wetlands and other sensitive areas by requiring fuel station setbacks from sensitive lands of at least 100 feet, ideally 500 feet. A setback of at least 100 feet will help ensure wetlands do not suffer costly damage from underground storage tank leaks in addition to somewhat mitigating their other potential impacts on wetlands and sensitive species including stormwater, light pollution, noise pollution, etc.¹

Adding this type of protection into the municipal code is a sensible solution that many community members will likely support and appreciate. As you know, many community members are very concerned when a fuel station is proposed to be located directly next to a wetland or sensitive area. Those concerns are with good reason. If an underground tank were to leak the damage would impact the wetlands and species reliant on those wetlands and be very costly to clean up. Small precautions like a setback of at least 100 feet would help address these valid concerns which have been voiced in several land use application processes including but not limited to the recently proposed Chevron at 185th & West Union.

¹ Note, a 500-foot setback would better mitigate noise and light impacts on sensitive species than a 100-foot setback.

The use of setbacks for fuel stations is not a new idea, communities across the United States² have taken such measures to protect sensitive lands. Those communities' codes could be used as a blueprint to help alleviate stress on Land Use and Transportation staff's valuable time. We encourage the Board of Commissioners to be responsive to the community and adopt a setback for fuel stations of at least 100 feet from wetland and sensitive areas.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AS' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Ashley Short
Tualatin Riverkeeper & In-House Counsel
Tualatin Riverkeepers
Ashley@tualatinriverkeepers.org

² For example, Montgomery County, Maryland requires large fuel stations have a 500 foot setback from residential, park, wetland and environmentally sensitive areas. (Section 3.5.13.C.2.c : https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/montgomerycounty/latest/montgomeryco_md_zone2014/0-0-0-2044)