

## LandWatch Goes to the Mattresses Over Resorts

Written by H. Bruce Miller  
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The fight over Deschutes County's new destination resort rules isn't finished yet: Central Oregon LandWatch has put the county on notice that it plans to challenge them.

LandWatch filed notices of intent to appeal Thursday with the state Land Use Board of Appeals, charging that the county's new rules for determining what lands are eligible for resorts actually increase the development potential in the county.

The county is proposing to remove from its destination resort map only lands on which destination resorts couldn't be built anyway (because they are too small or are already developed with other uses), while allowing for additional developable land to be added to the destination resort map, LandWatch Executive Director Erik Kancler writes on the organization's website. The result, then, is a net gain of developable land for destination resorts in the county.

Further, even where the county is ostensibly removing lands from the map as ineligible, those lands may still stay in if the owner requests it. Under this grandfather clause, Kancler claims, the county is essentially allowing landowners to decide for themselves (without regard to the law) whether their lands are currently eligible for destination resorts.

LandWatch also is troubled because the new rules allow landowners to bring together several parcels to amass the 160 or more contiguous acres that state law requires for developing a resort.

For whatever reason, county governments are not paying attention to what citizens want on this issue, Kancler writes on the Blue Oregon site. The problem isn't that conservative elected officials aren't paying attention to a small set of liberal constituents. It's that local elected officials from both parties are largely ignoring complaints from a broad and politically diverse cross-section of their own communities. Which is why destination resort policy reform will likely only be achieved if the state legislature takes matters into its own hands.

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Meanwhile, a team of graduate students from the University of Oregon has embarked on a study that's supposed to objectively weigh the pros and cons of destination resort development in the county. The first phase of the effort involves discussions with four focus groups including people on both sides of the issue. The input from those groups is supposed to determine what kinds of positive and negative impacts the study will look into.

It would be nice if the study (for which the county will pay as much as \$40,000) came up with solid data that both the fans and the foes of destination resorts would accept. But after watching the resorts debate rage for more than 20 years, something tells me that's not gonna happen.