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DLCD Director Dick Benner Leaves Agency With a Legacy of Accomplishments

Dick Benner, long-time director of the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development, announced today that he would leave the agency at the end of July. Benner, a former staff attorney for 1000 Friends of Oregon and former executive director of the Columbia River Gorge Commission, will become senior assistant counsel for Metro in Portland.

Benner said he has enjoyed his years at the department but had grown tired of the long commute. He said he lives close enough to Metro to walk to work. "This is my contribution to the reversal of global warming. My only regret about the location of my new job is that it's too close for a good bike ride," Benner said.

Benner also said that his career with the Department has been marked by major accomplishments, including:

- Working with and sitting on the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC);
- Working with the Oregon Legislature to improve Oregon's farmland protection program;
- Working with the Governor's Office on the new Community Solutions Team and assisting in the development of the team's Integration and Investment Strategy;
- Development of the Transportation and Growth Management Program, a joint effort with the Oregon Department of Transportation to link land use and transportation planning.

"The Oregon statewide land use planning program is recognized nationally and frequently honored as the best in the nation," Benner said. "I am grateful to have had the chance, which I shared with many people who care deeply about Oregon, to shape the land use program and keep it at the forefront of planning efforts nationwide."

Governor John Kitzhaber said that Benner had been a prime mover behind many of the reforms and improvements to the land use program for over 20 years. "He introduced me to the land use program in my first session of the Legislature in 1979. I've looked to Dick Benner for advice on the program ever since. We hate to see him go. But I am glad he

will remain in public service. I hope he doesn't think going to Metro protects him from my phone calls."

Portland land use lawyer Steven Pfeiffer, chairman of the Land Conservation and Development Commission, said the Commission would miss Benner. "Dick has very canny instincts about the program that made him an invaluable resource to us over the years. He has consistently been a proactive director who looked for solutions to highly complex problems in the interest of the entire state. We will certainly miss him and wish him well at Metro."

The Land Conservation and Development Commission is responsible for selecting a new agency director. The Governor's office will be working with Director Benner and Commission members during the transition.

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