

1000 Friends keep eyes on government

Oregon, Hawaii groups act as land use watchdogs

By Jan TenBruggencate
Advertiser Kauai Bureau

LIHUE — There are lots of government agencies to make sure the people obey the laws — but who makes sure the government does?

In Oregon, when it comes to the statewide land use program, it's the people, in the form of 1000 Friends of Oregon.



Richmond

A measure of its success is this: In 92 cases where the group felt a local government was misinterpreting the law, it won 83 times. That kind of a record would make any prosecutor proud.

Attorney Henry R. Richmond, 39, as executive director of 1000 Friends of Oregon, is pleased with it. But the fight isn't over.

Referendums on the land use law occur regularly. It just survived the latest one 55 to 45 percent earlier

this month. And the state legislature debates it every session, as it has ever since it became law back in 1973.

Then Oregon Gov. Tom McCall pushed the law into effect, setting statewide land use goals and ordering the local governments to implement them. And McCall saw that the law was going to need some help. So he, Richmond and others started 1000 Friends "to assure that this program is properly implemented by the state's Land Conservation and Development Commission and by cities and counties across the state."

If there's a place the Oregon organization's aims are taken to heart, it's Hawaii, and for good reason. Most other states don't have statewide planning laws and agencies, but Hawaii does.

Hawaii also has the only two direct offshoots from Richmond's group. There's the three-year-old 1000 Friends of Kauai, and the younger Hawaii's 1000 friends, which Richmond will address in Honolulu.

"They don't want to rock the boat. They take the path of least resistance.

"There's no lobby for the public, and there are very effective lobbies for the people who are subject to these regulations."

In Oregon, "there just wasn't an enforcement mechanism and there was a lot of pressure in the other direction to disobey the law," he said.

When 1000 Friends was created, it was an environmental organization, but it has moved away from that stance. It stuck with planning issues, but has moved into supporting lower-cost housing and government regulations that enable it.

And recently, the group has supported economic development, even to the point of assisting a developer of a 102-acre high technology industrial park in Corvallis, 100 miles south of Portland.

"This is something new for us, pushing industrial development," Richmond said. But it's a logical extension of the group's goals, he said.

While 1000 Friends works hard to keep development out of inappropriate areas like wilderness and good farmland, it accepts and today even begins to embrace the concept that development in the right areas is a must.

"It's important to make development easier in the designated areas. That's valid land use. This is the way the laws work."

The high-tech industrial park was inside the Corvallis urban growth boundary, and thus appropriately sited.

"The state is trying to diversify its economy. We're committed to help make that happen," Richmond said.

1000 Friends has lost some of its early environmentalist supporters in its development into what Richmond calls "a very disparate group."

That group might scatter far and wide on other issues, but generally sticks together in support of the land use law, even though its members include farmers, developers, loggers, environmentalists and others, he said.

The organization will stick to land use for several reasons. It has its hands full with just that. It is sufficiently specialized that it has gained a reputation for expertise in the area. (Its staff attorneys have written parts of the Oregon State Bar's land use textbook.) And it's safer, Richmond said.

"It's kind of like standing sideways in a duel: You make less of a target."

1000 Friends of Oregon has a staff of 13, with five attorneys and several planners. They give out information to local governments and Oregon residents, review land use plans, and give legal advice and sometimes free legal representation. There are 60 cooperating attorneys committed to handling without charge one case annually, referred to them by 1000 Friends.

The organization, Richmond said, goes "beyond the compromises of the legislature" to "respond to a day-to-day, month-to-month reality."

"A lot of this is just good old honest-to-goodness law enforcement," he said.

November 19, 1982
Honolulu Advertiser

Property of:
ETHNIC STUDIES LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII