



NETWORK of OREGON WATERSHED COUNCILS

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To: House Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee

From: Shawn Morford, PhD, Executive Director
Network of Oregon Watershed Councils

Re: Support for HB 3249- Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

Dear Chair Clem and Committee Members,

On behalf of Oregon's watershed councils, I am writing in support of HB 3249, the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program. The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils is a non-profit organization (501c3) that represents Oregon's watershed councils that work with willing landowners on restoration and conservation in Oregon. The bill represents the work of a broad coalition of partners that have come together to design a critical set of tools that provides for both support of working farms and ranches as well as for conservation. Among other things, it provides an important vehicle for watershed councils to work with landowners in development of conservation management plans. This bill would allow Oregon to leverage untapped federal funds. It also provides for critical support for succession planning on agricultural lands- an urgent need in the face of growing pressures on Oregon's working agricultural lands -while at the same time offering new avenues for conservation on private lands.

This bill supports the accomplishment of the Oregon Conservation Strategy goals that call for coordinated and voluntary approach to meeting Oregon's most critical conservation needs. This bill enables private landowners to more readily partner with watershed councils in implementing conservation on the ground.

Thank you for this opportunity to support this timely and innovative bill.