



## Wild Rivers Land Trust

*Protecting Natural Treasures and Working Lands on Oregon's Wild Rivers Coast*

To: Oregon State Legislature, House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use  
From: Ann Schmierer, Wild Rivers Land Trust  
Re: Strong support for HB 2729 and the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program  
Date: February 11, 2019

Dear Chair Clem, Vice-Chairs McLain and Post, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of Wild Rivers Land Trust, **we are writing to express our strong support for HB 2729**. Funding the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) at \$10M for the 2019-2021 biennium will provide a critical set of tools to support farmers and ranchers in communities throughout Oregon.

OAHP was developed to protect Oregon's unique agricultural lands and the conservation benefits those lands provide. Many of these legacy lands are currently at risk to subdivision and conversion as 75% of Oregon's agricultural lands will change hands in the next 20 years. OAHP was codified by the legislature in 2017 with strong bipartisan support and became law, yet it lacks funding to implement the programs it was designed to deliver.

The ranching and farming communities and enterprises on the southern Oregon coast are critical to the economy and the culture. OAHP is viewed as a fundamental need for agriculture in our region to preserve the way of life AND the environment. These concepts of agricultural production and conservation are not only compatible but also complementary. OAHP can provide the underpinnings to demonstrate how Oregon's private working lands provide both the economic and ecological foundations for the state.

Of critical importance to our region are the dwindling salmon populations in our coastal rivers. Farmers and ranchers also enjoy fishing, and see how habitat on their lands could be restored that would provide a key link in salmon recovery. However, the funding to create a permanent solution, through conservation easements, is lacking in Oregon. Having a well-funded OAHP will provide uplift in preserving agricultural production, increase critical salmon habitat and water quality measures, and maintain the culture of these productive regions for future generations.

There is an urgent need for the voluntary tools that the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program is designed to provide. **We urge you to support the \$10 million funding request to implement the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program** and fund projects with the growing host of willing and interested landowners who want to protect their working lands that will provide long-term solutions for their families, communities, and the state of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Ann Schmierer, Executive Director, Wild Rivers Land Trust