



**OREGON**  
ASSOCIATION OF  
NURSERIES

**Testimony before Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources**

**Relating to Senate Bill 5502, Appropriates money from General Fund to State Department of Agriculture for certain biennial expenses**

By Jeff Stone, Executive Director, Oregon Association of Nurseries  
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Co-Chairs Senator Taylor and Representative Reardon, members of the subcommittee, my name is Jeff Stone and I serve as the Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN). Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the issue of funding for the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) in the 2021-2023 biennium.

The ODA is an important partner to the OAN, not only in terms of their role as a competent regulator but as a partner to ensure that Oregon remains the best at quality nursery production in the United States.

**The Economic Footprint of the Nursery and Greenhouse Industry**

The nursery and greenhouse industry are the state's largest agricultural sector, and the industry ranks third in the nation, with over \$1.02 billion in sales annually to customers in Oregon, the rest of the United States, and abroad. In fact, nearly 75% of the nursery stock grown in our state leaves our borders – with over half reaching markets east of the Mississippi River. Oregon's elite growers send ecologically friendly green products out of the state and bring traded sector dollars back to Oregon.

Nursery association members represent wholesale plant growers, retailers, and greenhouse operators and suppliers across Oregon. Our members are located throughout the state, with our largest nursery growing operations found in Clackamas, Marion, Washington, Yamhill, and Multnomah Counties.

**ODA programs help the industry thrive and protects plant production**

There are a handful of reductions in the ODA budget that have consequential impacts to Ag water quality and invasive species management and prevention that are of importance to agriculture. We would like to address those needs as well as highlight the importance of the ODA in daily operations of the nursery and greenhouse industry.

ODA staff have earned a national reputation among state plant health officials for their leadership, effectiveness, dedications, and innovative approach to plant pest and disease issues. It is vitally important to preserve those ODA staff and programs that allow Oregon to address emerging pest and disease threats quickly and effectively. The OAN continues to support and partner with ODA's Plant Protection programs, particularly the IPPM (Insect Pest Prevention and Management) Program, Noxious Weed Program, and the Nursery Program.

- **Japanese Beetle Eradication Funding (Policy Package 310):** \$1,924,461 Lottery Funds. Fully fund to continue Japanese Beetle eradication efforts to protect our agriculture sector and ecosystems from this invasive pest. The infestation continues to spread threatening the nursery and agriculture industry by feeding on its products and plants.
- **Noxious Weed Control:** Preserve the Noxious Weed Program by maintaining funds in the Noxious Weed Control Lottery Fund. Shifting funds (\$464,855 Lottery Funds to Other Funds) to the Hemp program would effectively eliminate the Noxious Weed Program which would have negative, direct impact on availability and quality of water. The program, which administers grants and implements prevention and integrated control projects, already received substantial cuts in Lottery Funds in 2020.

## **Ag Water Quality**

There is a plethora of water quality policy option packages that span several state agencies (ODA, Water Resources Department, and the Department of Environmental Quality). The collaboration between the agencies is critical, and we appreciate the roles that each agency plays in protecting water quality and supply. The OAN is dedicated to protecting Oregon's precious resource of water, innovating how our growers use and manage water, and ensuring the highest quality of water. The Agriculture Water Quality Program is responsible for preventing and controlling pollution from agricultural activities through implementation of Strategic Implementation Areas.

However, it is important for the subcommittee to understand that ODA must maintain jurisdiction and staffing over water quality on agricultural lands. It is concerning to the OAN the reductions to staffing and omissions of vital programs in the Ag Water Quality areas in ODA.

- Eliminating two ag water quality positions would hinder ODA's capacity to effectively understand whether ag land management measures are having an impact on water quality. Reductions in ag water quality to the ODA budget that are concerning to the OAN. The OAN urges the committee to not eliminate the two ag water quality position.

The ODA is performing important ongoing work through the Strategic Implementation Areas and continuous dialogue with agricultural operations. We support ODA's water

quality and watershed protection. The OAN urges the subcommittee to include Policy Option Packages 340 and 350.

- **Policy Option Package 340 (Water Quality Improvement Work in Strategic Areas):** An important component to ODA's Climate change plan given carbon sequestration and climate change adaptation benefits. The position and resources for funding included in the POP (\$883,374 Lottery Funds) would enhance ODA's work with landowners to improve streamside conditions and achieve water quality goals in agricultural watersheds.
- **Policy Option Package 350 (Groundwater Quality Improvements and Emissions Reductions):** This work benefits water quality wherever crops are grown in Oregon and will reduce nitrous oxide emissions due to increased nitrogen use efficiency. The requested funding (\$500,000 General Fund) for research to enhance fertilizer use on crops and contracted facilitation services in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area (GWMA), would help establish criteria, targets, and a strategic plan to achieve progress.

Finally, the OAN supports POP 320 (Worker Protection Standard Position) which would make permanent the position, through \$229,935 Other Funds, to continue outreach and education regarding rights and responsibilities of agricultural employers and employees under the federal Worker Protection Standard and related state laws. The position has been a trusted resource to our industry employers and workers, furthering compliance, and safety in the constantly changing regulatory environment.

We appreciate and support ODA for all their work as partners and regulators. I thank you for your time and attention and urge you to support Senate Bill 5502.