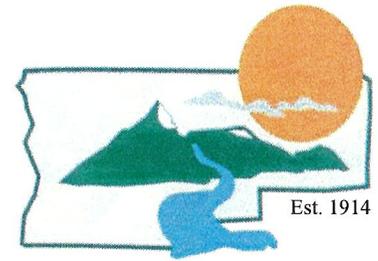


JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

66 S.E. "D" St., Suite A • Madras, Oregon 97741 • Ph: (541) 475-2449 • FAX: (541) 475-4454



April 14, 2021

Oregon Dept. of Agriculture
635 Capital St
Salem, OR 97301

To the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

This is a request to preserve ODA staff budget funding for 2021-2023 ODA Noxious Weed Control Lottery Funds rather than shifting funds to Other Funds in the Hemp Program.

Please understand the long-term importance of funding the ODA Weed Program goes beyond the dollar amount. As the Jefferson County Weed Program Coordinator, I experienced abundant gratitude from our landowners that received assistance controlling noxious weeds due to the ODA Lottery Funds. ODA Lottery grant programs build lasting partnerships between private, County, State, and Federal entities because we accomplish exponentially more together than any program could individually. This ODA program is enhancing the quality of life for Oregonians while protecting our pocketbooks, watersheds and rangelands.

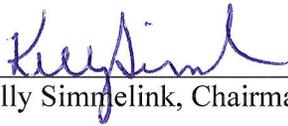
According to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) noxious weed projects have a 34 to 1 benefit to cost ratio, yielding substantially more benefit per dollar than many other State funded programs can claim. Last year's ODA Jefferson County grant benefitted over thirty landowners allowing them access to herbicides, consultations, weed identification and weed treatments from County staff and contractors.

As you're undoubtedly aware, Central Oregon's population is growing exponentially, with many new residents requiring assistance dealing with significant negative implications of noxious weeds on rural, agriculturally based land. Public participation has increased at County Weed Committee meetings as a direct correlation of increased outreach and awareness afforded by the ODA Program. Last year, farmers and ranchers preserved hundreds of acres of productive rangeland and farmland while protecting steelhead habitat in the Trout Creek watershed. This also saved our cooperators thousands of dollars.

The proposed shifting of Noxious Weed Control Lottery Funds to Other Funds in the Hemp Program goes directly against ODA's mission to "protect the natural resource base for present and future generations of farmers and ranchers" and extinguishes Jefferson County's ability to supportively assist landowners with IPM, protecting soil and water quality, enhancing Steelhead habitat and burdens the taxpayer with short-term solutions by unraveling watershed enhancement projects in the middle of the process. Instead, let's continue building upon our success and keep funding staff in Noxious Weed Control.

The Jefferson County Weed Advisory Committee and Jefferson County Board of Commissioners support sustained funding for ODA staff in the Noxious Weed Control Program and do not support the proposed shifting of funding towards the Hemp Program.

Sincerely,



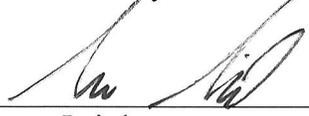
Kelly Simmelink, Chairman



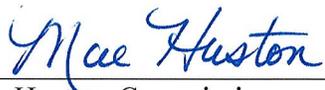
Rich Affeldt,
Jefferson County Weed Advisory Committee Chair



Wayne Fording, Commissioner



Thomas Laird,
Jefferson County Weed Program Coordinator



Mae Huston, Commissioner