



Oregon Cattlemen's Association
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TESTIMONY

Department of Environmental Quality 2021-2023 Budget

HB 5502 and HB 5503

April 21, 2021

Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the budget for the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). ODA is both a regulator and a partner with every producer/rancher from every sector of Oregon's diverse agricultural industry. This Agency is often looked to by the public to enforce regulations when co-existence issues arise between neighbors. The ODA staff is tasked with interacting with producers who are from multi-generational farm operations while also engaging citizens who want to establish a viable agricultural business. It is of paramount importance the budget of the Oregon Department of Agriculture be more than adequate to ensure the Agency can meet the full spectrum of expectations from regulators, the public and the agricultural producers of all sizes and locations.

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association (OCA) is the trade association established in 1913 to serve every cattle producer across the State of Oregon. According to the most recent agriculture census conducted by USDA, there are 1.3 million cattle in Oregon with ranch families in every Oregon County. The economic contribution of the cattle sector to the State according to the 2020 Oregon Department of Agriculture exceeds \$625M at the farm gate prior to processing and marketing of the cattle.

ODA is a well-managed, fiscally responsible agency with both general fund support and industry paid fees. The Oregon Cattlemen's Association respectfully offers the following comments for the Committee's consideration:

State Brand Inspection Program – OCA supports SB 32 as amended to fund the State Brand Inspection Program. Oregon's program is heralded by many states who desire a robust program that is as impactful and relevant today as it was when it was established.

Water quality (Restoration of Cut Positions, Policy Packages 340, 350 & 360):

- OCA is concerned about the proposed elimination of the two ag water quality positions (\$444,958) and elimination of and Soil and Water Conservation District position and support (\$317,594). With DEQ ramping up their temperature total maximum daily loads (TMDLs), we must ensure that ODA is adequately resourced to keep up with the significant increase in workload the program will see in the coming years.
- OCA supports full funding for the agency's original funding request in Policy Package 340 – Strategic Implementation Areas. Oregon agriculture has made a strong commitment to water quality. Fully funding this package would add one position and expand focus to additional areas of the state. Further, OCA supports other water programs including: Klamath Ag Water Quality Monitoring and Lower Umatilla Groundwater Monitoring and Coordination.

State Noxious Weed Program Fund Shift (Restoration of Cut Positions): OCA opposes moving the current noxious weed lottery fund positions to a different program funded by other funds. This shift eliminates the Noxious Weed Control program, and our organizations strongly oppose this. Noxious weeds are posing increasing risks to our ecosystems, including urban settings as well as farms and forests, and ODA's program is critical to managing these risks. We cannot afford to eliminate this program.

Food Safety Program (Restoration of Positions; Policy Package 450):

- OCA is concerned about the proposed elimination of two Food Safety Management Positions (\$629,706). When paired with the fee increase proposed in SB 33, this would throw the historical agreement for a 50/50 split in the program woefully out of balance and decrease needed support in the program. We strongly oppose the fee increase, and a decrease in staffing for the program.
- OCA supports the continuation of the five federal fund positions contained in Policy Package 450. The Federal Food Safety Modernization Act, has caused a significant increase in the work load of this program, and this federal funding is critical to program implementation.

Worker Protection Standard (Policy Package 320): OCA supports the continuation of the position for education, training and technical assistance for agricultural employers and employees regarding the worker protection standard.

State Meat Inspection (Policy Package 087): OCA enthusiastically supports the continuation of the positions and costs approved in the 2020 special session into the next biennia to get the state meat inspection program established.

Wolf compensation (SB 642): OCA supports funding an additional \$915,000 in general funds to leverage federal funds and respond to the growing demand for the program now that wolves are delisted statewide. The statewide dispersal and subsequent delisting of wolves has led to an increased demand for reimbursements to ranchers to fund nonlethal measures and to compensate for losses due to wolf depredations. A readily available and easily navigated compensation program ensures producer engagement which results in a balanced approach to predator control.

Predator Control: OCA supports the retention of APHIS Wildlife Services funding in the base budget. These dollars are leveraged at every level of government to provide crucial depredation support to landowners and communities.

Adequate funding for this multi-faceted Agency will directly affect Oregon's agricultural producers' ability to continue in their daily commitment to produce food and fiber for Oregonians who look to their local food suppliers for safe food.

Thank you for receiving this testimony and for your ongoing service.

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