



April 22, 2021
Joint Ways & Means, Natural Resources Subcommittee
Water Quality Funding in HB 5502 (ODA Budget)

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

Our organizations write to provide additional detail on our request regarding the need to restore and expand funding for agricultural water quality within the Oregon Department of Agriculture budget for the 2021-23 biennia.

As we explained in our testimony, we are very 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) across the state in the next biennia, 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. The Oregon Department of Agriculture is the designated management agency (DMA) for implementation of TMDLs on agricultural land, and they need to have adequate staff to effectively do their job. To that end, we recommend authorizing the existing Soil and Water Conservation District position at the manager level to oversee SWCD work and assist with TMDL implementation, including working with farmers, irrigation districts, and other agricultural entities to ensure that TMDL work is correct implemented on the ground.

We also support 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. This position could also help with boots on the ground for TMDL implementation.

We are also supportive of the other water quality programs, Klamath Ag Water Quality Monitoring and Lower Umatilla Groundwater Monitoring and Coordination, found in POPs 350 & 360. This work is necessary to ensuring that the focused water quality work needed by ODA around the state is actually moving forward, and that ODA has the resources to fulfill their role as a partner to DEQ in addressing water quality concerns with an agricultural nexus.

Thank you for your consideration.

Contact:
Mary Anne Cooper, OFB
April Snell, OWRC