

Dear Ways and Means Committee—

Thank you for this opportunity to write to you why I strongly support the **Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP)**, and why NOW is the time to fund this program. This opportunity to have OAHP funded through the America Rescue Plan Act, and I hope you will take this opportunity to designate funding, at long last, for this important state program. Specifically, I am asking that you **support the request of \$10 million from ARPA for the OAHP.**

Why do I feel so strongly about this opportunity to fund the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program?

- This program was created by the legislature in 2017 with significant bi-partisan support, but never funded. **It's all ready to go...**the rule-making work was completed, OWEB is ready to oversee the program, and there are abundant projects to fund NOW. Federal funding could be leveraged NOW. All we need is the funding for OAHP.
- OWEB's lottery funding cannot pay for the program because the constitution restricts it to projects that benefit habitat and water quality and quantity *only*, not agriculture.
- Sadly, **Oregon is one of the last states that does not have matching monies for federal agricultural easements...**we should be leveraging these millions of dollars into our state to benefit farmers and ranchers, and the next generation of agricultural operators. Not having a funded OAHP degrades our productive working lands, degrades our environment, and degrades the agricultural capacity of Oregon.
- **Agriculture is a big part of the state's economy, and a way of life that should be sustained.** A funded OAHP will help farming and ranching communities stay vibrant, and support exports.
- **OAHP supports conservation AND keeps working land working.** Implementation of a conservation plan on agricultural land can support water quantity and quality and associated habitat. This is a vital to the Coho Business Plan for Coho salmon recovery in our coastal rivers thus ALSO supports the fishing industry.

In closing, **if you really want to help rural Oregonians, this is a great way to do so.** As our aging ranchers and farmers are needing to pass on these agricultural lands to the next generation, this program will save much of the agricultural lands that could be easily lost to development, especially here on the coast. I urge you to fund this program at the \$10M level requested, and you will be pleased to see the fantastic results put on the ground that will help the agricultural operators in Oregon, and help us recover salmon and improve water quality in our coastal rivers.

I greatly appreciate you taking this under consideration, and thank you for the work you do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Schmierer".

Ann Schmierer, Executive Director of Wild Rivers Land Trust