

**Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural
Resources and Water
On HB 3123**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

The Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 3123, which would fund Oregon State University Soil and Agricultural Sciences researchers to study the effects of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in land applied biosolids on soil, water, and agricultural crops in different parts of the state.

According to a 2022 report by the Association of Clean Water Agencies

Growing scientific evidence shows that exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) may lead to a range of human health problems, even at low exposure levels. PFAS are a high priority concern because they do not breakdown easily, they are difficult to treat, and they are found just about everywhere. For these reasons, PFAS have been dubbed "forever chemicals."¹

This bill would provide an opportunity to better understand the threats and human health risks from PFAS in Oregon.

PFAS compounds are found in thousands of common consumer products and are used in some commercial and industrial processes. They can be released into the air, land, and water in a variety of ways. While Oregon does not have many PFAS-contaminated sites releasing PFAS directly into the environment, PFAS from consumer products does end up in our waste stream, including our wastewater effluent and biosolids.

Biosolids are the treated solids byproducts of the wastewater treatment process. Use as a beneficial soil amendment has long been held as wastewater utilities' preferred management strategy for biosolids. Farmers across the state appreciate the product because it builds healthy soil, helps soil retain carbon, and saves money on chemical fertilizers which can sometimes contain unknown levels of toxic chemicals.

Currently land application of treated biosolids on agricultural lands in Oregon is regulated to protect human health and the environment. However, while biosolids are treated and tested for many pollutants, monitoring requirements for PFAS have yet to be established. HB 3123 would enable a collaborative effort among the OSU scientific research community, public wastewater utilities, farmers, and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to conduct the studies necessary to inform citizens, farms, public wastewater agencies, regulators, and state policy makers about biosolids land application safety and risks related to PFAS in biosolids.

OEC's priority is to ensure Oregonians live healthier lives because our air, water and land are cleaner; our food is more sustainably produced; and the products, energy and transportation we rely on are safer for our environment. Oregon must do the work necessary to understand and ensure that PFAS is not contaminating products consumed by animals or people, or our soil and water. Therefore, OEC urges support for the research that would be conducted with the funding provided by HB3123.

ⁱ MANAGING PFAS IN OREGON: A Clean Water Agency Perspective (2022), pg. 1. Association of Clean Water Agencies.