



**COALITION OF OREGON LAND TRUSTS**

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March 13, 2023

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

From: The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

**RE: Support for HB 3366 - Full Funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program**

Chair Helm and Committee Members,

It is our absolute pleasure to testify in strong support of HB 3366, a bipartisan bill that will fully fund the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) for the 2023-2025 biennium. The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT) has worked for more than 6 years with a broad coalition of conservation and agricultural organizations to create and fund the OAHP, a program that is dedicated to protecting farm and ranch land, keeping it in production, and enhancing its natural resource values.

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts is a network of 32 member organizations working in Oregon to protect our natural world - our water, wildlife, and open spaces - for all people, forever. Together, our statewide community of land trusts has protected more than 370,000 acres of land, including agricultural and rangeland. Our farmers and ranchers are at the heart of Oregon's economy. With over 37,000 active farms and ranches throughout the state, our working lands support \$50 billion in annual economic impact and thousands of agricultural-related jobs.

However, 64% of our working lands (10.45 million acres) will change hands over the next 20 years, and more than 80% of Oregon farmers and ranchers do not currently have a succession plan in place for that transition. This is where the OAHP comes in. OAHP funds 4 grant programs: working lands conservation easements and covenants, conservation management plans and activities, succession planning education, and technical assistance for support organizations.

In their 2023-2025 Agency Requested Budget, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) requested \$10 million in grants (POP 215) and \$800,000 for administration (POP 115)



**24 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** Blue Mountain Land Trust • Center for Natural Lands Management • Columbia Land Trust  
Deschutes Land Trust • Ducks Unlimited • Forest Park Conservancy • Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust  
Greenbelt Land Trust • Klamath Lake Land Trust • Lower Nehalem Community Trust • McKenzie River Trust  
North Coast Land Conservancy • Northwest Rangeland Trust • Oregon Agricultural Trust • Oregon Desert Land Trust  
Pacific Forest Trust • Southern Oregon Land Conservancy • The Conservation Fund • The Nature Conservancy in Oregon

The Trust for Public Land • The Wetlands Conservancy • Wallowa Land Trust • Western Rivers Conservancy • Wild Rivers Land Trust  
**8 ASSOCIATE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** Black Oregon Land Trust • Cerro Gordo Land Conservancy • Clackamas Soil & Water  
Conservation District • East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District • Helvetia Community Association  
Tualatin Soil & Water Conservation District • View the Future • Yamhill Soil & Water Conservation District

of the OAHP. Unfortunately, that funding was not included in the Governor's Recommended Budget for OWEB. HB 3366 will fill this gap by providing the funding requested by OWEB for the OAHP for the next 2 years.

The timing of this funding is critical. The federal government just invested an additional \$20 billion in agricultural conservation programs through the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act. OAHP helps Oregon leverage federal funds that we have left on the table for years. From 1996-2019, Oregon received only \$7.2 million in federal dollars from the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In contrast, the state of Rhode Island received \$43 million during that time period because they put \$36.6 million in state funding on the table. Last session's commitment of \$5 million to the OAHP almost immediately leveraged a 1,100% increase in federal funding through ACEP - an increase to \$6.7 million in 2022. The funding of the OAHP brings Oregon in line with the 26 other states with matching working lands easement grant programs.

This week, the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission will meet to discuss the first round of grant applications submitted for conservation easements and management plans. Four land trusts submitted seven projects for the conservation easement grant program that cover a variety of geographies and farm types. Collectively, these projects would protect 12,545 acres of working ranch and farm land, conserving habitats as varied as wetland, beach and bluff, riparian and wet prairies. These projects will also protect salmon-bearing tributaries and habitat for mule deer, sage grouse, elk, and California Bighorn sheep.

HB 3366 will help Oregon leverage federal dollars to conserve ranch and agricultural lands while keeping farm and ranch land in production, reduce carbon emissions, and support rural businesses and communities.

We urge the members of this committee to support HB 3366, and thank you for the time to testify.

Sincerely,



Kelley Beamer  
Executive Director  
Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

