



Southern Oregon
LAND
CONSERVANCY

PO BOX 954, ASHLAND, OR 97520 / 541 482 3069 / LANDCONSERVE.ORG

Rep. Ken Helm, Rep. Pam Marsh
Sen. Jeff Golden
Salem, OR

March 14, 2022

Re: Support for funding of Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

Dear Reps. Helm and Marsh and Sen. Golden:

We are writing to encourage you to support funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program. This first year's funding for OAHP more than doubled its impact by leveraging federal funds, so re-investing in this work is an effective way to conserve land and livelihoods in Oregon. Land trusts throughout the state have identified opportunities to preserve working farmland that remains at the heart of Oregon's economy and quality of life. There will never be a better time for OAHP to support this work.

Southern Oregon Land Conservancy (SOLC) was founded in 1978 with a mission to protect and enhance precious lands in Southern Oregon for their human and natural communities. More than a fifth of our 72 conservation easements include working lands, either ranchland, forests, farms or all three, almost half our protected acreage. Productive working agricultural lands are at risk as population and development pressure grows, so financing easements on those lands is an essential means of extending the life of working agricultural lands. SOLC is exploring the potential to conserve agricultural lands with local partners in Jackson and Josephine Counties, some of which would be eligible for federal financing of at least 50% of the easement cost. But without state funding to match, Oregon risks losing the leverage to access federal agricultural easement funds and conserve more of our most productive lands.

Investing in Oregon's Agricultural Heritage Program contributes to other key goals. Easements can support equity by helping entry of next generation and underrepresented Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other groups historically excluded from land ownership opportunities. Conserving agricultural land can also support essential climate resilience, sequestering carbon in forests, grasslands and soil. We urge the legislature to recognize the many values of Oregon's Agricultural Heritage, and to invest in the OAHP's program with renewed funding.

Sincerely,

Steve Wise, Executive Director, Southern Oregon Land Conservancy
Jim Coonan, C2 Cattle Company, Eagle Point, OR (Easement holder)



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