

Submitter: Elizabeth Graser-Lindsey

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural
Resources

Measure: SB5539

Please reinsert funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program into the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) budget - this is POP 215 (\$10 million for grants) and POP 115 (\$800,000 for administration). The place where I see the great need for this program and its funding is for working land -- farms, ranches and timber land -- abutting the Urban Growth Boundary where there are the most challenges to keeping working lands in production due to development pressures. This bill funds Oregon's Agricultural Heritage Program which allows voluntary contracts between landowners and land trusts so the property owner can be compensated for their development rights and the property can remain in agricultural production. These limited funds help the most important threatened lands be protected.

This program is very important where I live in Beavercreek, the rural community adjacent to Oregon City and the Greater Portland area, to help retain continued agricultural production. Here local produce supplies local grocery stores (some I see at Fred Meyer); YouPicks are located within driving distance of urban consumers which provides them with good food and an opportunity to appreciate rural values; small farmers can farm within driving distance of their necessary second job. The owners of a popular YouPick near me have thought about selling their property so they can retire. This program could allow them to sell their development rights and retire without the loss of this important local food production and without the community losing its agricultural character. The adjacent property is another large farm that has been owned and idled by out-of-state investors for the last 15 years who are currently working to develop the farm into McMansions.

Seeing these situations makes me glad bi-partisan support passed the original bill which now needs to be funded.