



April 21, 2023

900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

To the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources:

I am writing on behalf the communities and open spaces that Blue Mountain Land Trust (BMLT) serves throughout the Oregon counties of Baker, Grant, Wheeler, Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla, and Union. BMLT is a bi-state nationally accredited land trust working in southeastern Washington and Eastern Oregon to protect fish and wildlife, working farms and ranches, and open spaces for future generations.

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) has funded land acquisition projects that permanently protect over 90,000 acres of land throughout the state, including over 15,000 acres in BMLT projects in Wheeler and Baker counties.

Despite this immense accomplishment, more action must be taken to combat land loss and fragmentation, from wildlife habitat to productive farmland. Today, agricultural landscapes in Oregon are being lost at an [alarming rate](#), threatening food security, local ecosystems, and agricultural heritage. The need for land conservation in Oregon will continue to grow, as will OWEB's portfolio of land acquisitions.

I urge the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources to:

- 1. Support the protection of critical Oregon landscapes by funding increased OWEB staff capacity.*
- 2. Keep agricultural lands in production and leverage valuable federal funds by providing \$10.8 million for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund (OAHP) for the 2023-2025 biennium as proposed in the OWEB Agency Requested Budget (ARB) in POPs 115 and 215. This funding request is represented in HB 3366, which passed out of the House Agriculture Committee with a unanimous vote and now is in Ways and Means.*

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Martino".

Amanda Martino
Executive Director
Blue Mountain Land Trust