



Benton Soil and Water  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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2/6/2024

The Honorable Ken Helm  
House Interim Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Benton Soil and Water Conservation District where we work with land managers and several partners to control noxious weeds in the mid-Willamette valley. We accomplish this work by coordinating the Benton Cooperative Weed Management Area, outreach to landowners and residents, leading volunteer events to pull weeds, and surveying for A-list (high priority) weeds from the ODA noxious weed list.

Benton SWCD supports in full, House Bill 4148 Wildlife Package with special emphasis on the funding for the Oregon Invasive Species Council (OISC). The OISC is the state entity tasked with developing, coordinating, and implementing multi-taxa invasive species planning and response efforts across Oregon and we live in a time where we need robust leadership more than ever. Invasive species such as the Emerald Ash Borer and Mediterranean Oak Borer cannot be controlled appropriately without central leadership in the state and the OISC is where the coordinated efforts are planned. Funding the Emergency Control Account appropriately helps Oregon respond immediately to arrival of such pests.

We work with several organizations on the Willamette River to control multiple aquatic invasive species including *Ludwigia*, yellow floating heart, and garden yellow loosestrife. With appropriate funding, the OISC can help us communicate this work to the State Legislature and share our needs with lawmakers. Multiple organizations working across vast landscapes to control weeds supports other efforts in this funding package around habitat connectivity for wildlife. The aquatic invasive weed work in the Willamette helps to reduce ecological threats on more than 100 miles of the river and most of this work is being funded by 3 separate grants from the Oregon State Weed Board. While Weed Board grants are providing valuable support to this work, an improved situation would be to have a well-funded OISC to work with partners on larger funding packages to expedite river restoration on a crucial waterway for native salmonid populations in Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nate Johnson", is positioned above a blue horizontal line.

Nate Johnson (Feb 6, 2024 14:04 PST)

Nate Johnson  
Chair, Benton Soil and Water Conservation District

# Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package for 2024 session

Final Audit Report

2024-02-06

Created:	2024-02-06
By:	Candace Mackey (cmackey@bentonswcd.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAASdP4wU1tQ0yY5m6ufIQV241ctSHgrbLZ

## "Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package for 2024 session" History

-  Document created by Candace Mackey (cmackey@bentonswcd.org)  
2024-02-06 - 8:04:05 PM GMT
-  Document emailed to Nate Johnson (natojohnson@me.com) for signature  
2024-02-06 - 8:04:14 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Nate Johnson (natojohnson@me.com)  
2024-02-06 - 10:03:03 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Nate Johnson (natojohnson@me.com)  
Signature Date: 2024-02-06 - 10:04:06 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Agreement completed.  
2024-02-06 - 10:04:06 PM GMT