



**OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE**

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March 26, 2025

Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
Oregon State Legislature

RE: Oregon Department of Agriculture – March 25, 2025 Question Responses

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) submits this letter in response to questions posed by the Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources during the hearing on March 25, 2025.

**Senator Lew Fredrick**

***Request for additional information on long-term vacancies report***

The long-term vacancies report reflects positions primarily funded by Other Funds that are currently held vacant to manage available revenues (cash) and align with workload demands. As of this report, 44.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions are being held vacant. Eliminating these positions would not generate additional General Fund or Lottery Fund savings for the Department.

In the 2025–27 Governor’s Budget (Package 70), ODA is proposing to eliminate 7.2 FTE, resulting in a reduction of \$2,331,476 Other Funds expenses. This adjustment is intended to better align the authorized position count with actual operational needs. The remaining positions are currently under review as part of agency-wide program and position realignment efforts that support ODA’s long-term strategic and operational objectives.

The long-term vacancy report includes seven General Fund and Lottery Fund FTE positions, totaling approximately \$1,870,000. As part of the Department’s strategic organizational realignment, 2025-27 budget, and ongoing legislative discussions, the following positions have formal considerations:

- **Agriculture Economic Development / Operations and Policy 3:** The position had been held vacant to support work within the program as funds available to activities have reduced over time. This position is proposed to be eliminated in the 2025-27 Governor Budget and the savings are factored into the current pkg 90.
- **Administrative Services / Information Systems Specialist 6:** Vacancy savings from this position are supporting a non-budgeted Human Resource Analyst 3 during the 2023–25 biennium. ODA’s permanent finance plan includes formalizing the HRA 3 position to address long-term administrative capacity needs. Eliminating this position would further strain administrative operations and hinder the agency’s focus on rebuilding the core functions of agency.

- **Insect Pest Prevention and Management / Natural Resource Specialist 3:** This position is currently filled. It was mistakenly coded in the Workday system and has since been corrected to remove it from the long-term vacancy report.

The remaining four General Fund and Lottery Fund positions have remained vacant due to recruitment challenges and shifting operational priorities:

- **State Meat Inspection / Microbiologist 3:** The positions in the state meat inspection program were approved and added to the budget prior to full implementation of the program. As the state meat inspection program matured, the Department determined that Microbiologist responsibilities could be absorbed by the existing regulatory laboratory program and the program has need for more inspector positions. ODA has intended to reclassify this position to maintain that inspection capacity and eliminating the General Fund could constrain that capacity for meat inspection services.
- **Agriculture Water Quality / Natural Resource Specialist 4:** Established in the 2023 legislative session, recruitment for this position is currently active. Delays were due to shifting internal priorities and policy developments. This position will play a key role in implementing the state's nitrate reduction plan in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area (LUBGWMA).
- **Confined Animal Feeding Operation / Natural Resource Specialists 3 & 4:** These positions were created under Senate Bill 85 (2023). The CAFO Program has been attempting to fill the program manager role since June 2024. Following two unsuccessful recruitments, a third effort is currently underway. The program is prioritizing the manager hire to ensure effective leadership before building the broader team.
  - Eliminating the NRS 4 position would hinder progress on updating and issuing critical water quality permits, including Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF), National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), and Nutrient Application Permits (NAP).
  - Eliminating the NRS 3 field inspector position would directly impact planned field work and response activities in the LUBGWMA as part of the State's nitrate reduction strategy.

ODA remains committed to aligning its workforce with available resources, legislative intent, and the evolving needs of the agricultural and natural resource sectors. We appreciate the opportunity to clarify how long-term vacancies are being managed within our strategic framework and budget planning process. ODA looks forward to continued collaboration with the Legislature to ensure we maintain the operational capacity necessary to fulfill our mission and serve Oregon's communities effectively.