



**OREGON
AGRICULTURAL
TRUST**

Monday, January 20, 2025

To: House Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water Committee

From: Oregon Agricultural Trust

RE: In support of HB 3131 and \$17.3 Million in funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) in 2025-2027 Budget

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald, and Members of the Committee:

Oregon Agricultural Trust writes to you today to share our strong support for HB 3131 and its **\$17.3 million** in funding the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) in the 2025 Oregon Legislative Session. OAHP helps Oregon leverage a remarkable **2:1 federal match** through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and protects working ranch and farmlands for their agriculture and natural resource values.

Our nonprofit has a mission to partner with farmers and ranchers to protect their agricultural land for the benefit of Oregon's economies, communities and landscapes. To that end, we've protected over 30,000 acres of agricultural land. We've submitted multiple projects for OAHP funding and received OAHP funding for landowners in every round so far. Our OAHP awards have supported producers from first-generation ranchers in Lake County to multi-generation farmers in Clatsop County. These farmers have used the funds from easements to expand or stabilize their businesses, make the land more affordable to a future generation, and protect the land base for all future generations.

Working land conservation easements are a smart business and conservation tool that has bipartisan support at a state and federal level. They are a voluntary agreement that allows farmers and ranchers to realize the equity in their land without selling part of it or taking it out of production. We have received \$10 million in USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Regional Conservation Partnership Program dollars, and we anticipate receiving more from this program from applications we submit in April. **OAHP provides critical match funding for these federal dollars, which would have to be returned if we do not find match.**

OAHP also circulates needed funding in rural communities. Colorado found that every state dollar of easement funding spent generates \$2.18 in local economic activity. Working land easements protect land that releases 58-70 times fewer greenhouse gasses than developed land according to the American Farmland Trust, and that can be used to sequester carbon.



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In addition to working land easements, OAHP's conservation management plan grants help producers implement practices that benefit ag and conservation. It's Technical Assistance program helps organizations like ours conduct outreach and do needed activities to get conservation work on the ground. And OAHP's succession planning program can help fund small projects that get groups of producers in the door to start planning for succession, including land access for familial and non-familial successors.

In all, OAHP helps Oregon secure federal match while supporting our rural lands and the producers (current and future) who will steward these lands while supporting the state's second largest industry – agriculture. Please invest in OAHP in 2025-2027 to invest in Oregon.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nellie McAdams', is positioned below the 'Thank you,' text.

Nellie McAdams, Executive Director