

Submitter: STEPHEN COOK  
On Behalf Of: Columbia Land Trust  
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3131

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

Columbia Land Trust wants to share its strong support for HB 3131 and \$17.3 million in funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) in the 2025 Oregon Legislative Session. OAHP helps Oregon leverage a generous 2:1 federal match through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and protects working ranches and farms throughout Oregon for their agriculture and natural resource values.

Columbia Land Trust is a nonprofit conservation organization that works with willing landowners to conserve natural and working lands, such as farms and forests, in the Lower Columbia River Region in both Oregon and Washington.

Organizations making use of conservation easements or covenants to protect farms and ranches under OAHP provide many benefits, including:

- They allow farmers and ranchers to realize some of the equity in their land without selling part of the farm or ranch to developers.
- They work with farmers on a voluntary basis to maintain and improve farm production while preserving ag land and conserving natural habitat.
- They provide technical assistance that helps farmers adapt to climate change and adopt climate-friendly practices,
- They offer programs that help farmers find the next generation to take over the land and keep it in production.

OAHP has broad support across the industry and bipartisan support in the legislature. The Climate Action Commission has repeatedly recommended funding for OAHP as an important part of Natural and Working Land climate mitigation.

Columbia Land Trust does not anticipate using the OAHP itself in this biennium. But we know that there are other land trusts that will use the program to accomplish important conservation if adequate funding is available under OAHP. Please ensure the program is funded so that these projects can be accomplished.

Thank you,  
Stephen F. Cook

General Counsel, Columbia Land Trust