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January 22, 2025

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

RE: Ducks Unlimited support for HB 3131 and \$17.3 Million in funding for OAHP

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

We write to you today to share Ducks Unlimited's strong support for HB 3131 and its \$17.3 million in funding the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP). 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.

Ducks Unlimited (DU) conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated wet habitats for North America's waterfowl and has over 6,000 members in Oregon. Using important state funding sources like OAHP, DU staff work with landowners and farmers to achieve desired outcomes on the land that concurrently improves working farms and wildlife habitats.

Approved funding from HB 3131 can leverage federal dollars to invest more in our vital farm and ranchlands. These investments such as the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), can help to protect tens of thousands of wetlands and agricultural acres across our diverse geography. Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that Oregon lost 340,000 acres from agricultural production from 2012-2017, some of which was urbanized. American Farmland projects that Oregon could lose up to 109,000 acres of agricultural land between 2016-2040.

We believe OAHP is an essential tool to assist landowners, including young and underserved community members, to protect habitat, provide ecosystem services and help the local economy. These programs help farmers pass these practices to the next generation and keep working farmlands in production.

DU has identified OAHP as a funding source for several additional future projects that best fit landowner and farmers' needs. OAHP has broad support, and we respectfully request that the co-chairs and members support this bill. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this letter.

Thank you,

Jeffrey McCreary
Director of Operations- Western Region