

Submitter: Ellen Hammond
On Behalf Of: Jefferson Co Soil and Water Conservation District
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3131

Jan 27, 2025

House Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water Committee
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP), HB 3131 in 2025-2027

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

I'm writing on behalf of the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in support of HB 3131, and its request for funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP).

OAHP protects working ranch and farmlands for their agriculture and natural resource values through four grant programs including conservation easements and conservation management plan grants. It's a valuable program, protecting farms and ranches in Oregon and providing technical assistance and financial incentives for agricultural conservation practices.

Jefferson County has experienced drought conditions for the last 5 years, and water delivery by the 59,000 acre North Unit Irrigation District has been curtailed by half to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the usual 2+ acre-feet. Jefferson County agriculture is valuable, diverse, at risk, and worth supporting. For instance, our farmers provide half the hybrid carrot seed planted world wide and include the second largest wildflower seed farm in the country. In 2023, the Jefferson County Agricultural Drought Resiliency Group developed a plan to thrive in spite of water scarcity. The SWCD facilitated this effort and is responsible for overseeing implementation. The OAHP can provide our farmers and ranchers with tools to help them stay in business while also supporting environmental stewardship.

Please support and do all you can to advance HB 3131.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Ellen Hammond, Conservation Specialist
Jefferson County SWCD
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