

February 3, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Wildfire:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2979.

My name is Nella Mae Parks, and today I am writing from my farm in Cove in northeast Oregon.

I submitted an application to the Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience grant last year on behalf of myself and a neighboring farm.

The grant allowed us to fix our ditch diversion, buy and install more shade cloth, store more water, improve irrigation efficiency through collection and reuse of water, and purchase solar pumps.

And it also allowed me to install this dual fuel generator which means I can keep my vegetable crops alive even if the power goes out or I run out of gasoline because it also runs on my propane tank.

My farm literally feeds my neighbors. The thousands of pounds of food we grow each year are sold to families, restaurants, schools, and the food bank. We have a farmstand at the end of the driveway which acts as the only grocery store in Cove. My farm is small, but it is important in my community, and I am grateful the grant program was open to small farms.

I want other small farms to have the same opportunity to invest in critical supplies and infrastructure that will keep us going even in a drought year, a heat dome, a wildfire or whatever else we face.

I also want to applaud the legislature, ORCAN, and OSU for the program's grant model.

When I first read the grant application I thought, "whoever wrote this must have been reading my mind because everything I need is funded by this program."

And then I remembered. About a year before I applied for the grant, a researcher from OSU called and interviewed me about what kind of resources I would need to be more resilient on our farm. I said shade cloth, irrigation efficiency, backup power, solar pumps, water storage, and ditch improvements. I was surprised and happy that my interview comments went directly into the grant application.

I think this bottom up approach where the public is asked about what our greatest needs are is unique. This is a great example of government responsiveness, and I want to see more programs operate like this one.

Please support SB 2979 and please utilize it as a model. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Nella Mae Parks
Nella Mae's Farm
Cove, Oregon