

**Testimony to the House Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and
Water Committee
On HB 2947**

February 10, 2025

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance equitable, innovative and collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council strongly supports HB 2947.

The Oregon Environmental Council's (OEC) priority is to ensure Oregonians live healthier lives because our air, water and land are cleaner; our food is more sustainably produced; and the products, energy, and transportation we rely on are safer for our environment.

OEC appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2947, which would provide funding for Oregon State University Soil and Agricultural Sciences researchers to study the effects of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in land applied biosolids on soil, water, and agricultural crops in different parts of the state.

Growing scientific evidence shows that exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) leads to a range of human health problems, even at low exposure levels. (See, e.g., the 2022 report by the Association of Clean Water Agencies¹) This bill would provide an opportunity to better understand the threats and human health risks from PFAS in Oregon.

PFAS are a high priority concern because they do not break down easily, they are difficult to treat or remove using current technologies, and they are found just about everywhere. For these reasons, PFAS have been dubbed "forever chemicals."

PFAS compounds are found in thousands of common consumer products and are used in some commercial and industrial processes. They can be released into the air, land, and water in a variety of ways. While Oregon does not have many PFAS-contaminated sites releasing PFAS directly into the environment, PFAS from consumer products does end up in our waste stream, including our wastewater effluent and biosolids.

Biosolids are the treated solids byproducts of the wastewater treatment process. Use as a beneficial soil amendment has long been held as wastewater utilities' preferred management strategy for biosolids. Farmers across the state appreciate the product because it builds healthy soil, helps soil retain carbon, and saves money on chemical fertilizers which can contain unknown levels of toxic chemicals, including PFAS.

Currently land application of treated biosolids on agricultural lands in Oregon is regulated to protect human health and the environment. However, while biosolids are regulated to meet standards that protect public health and the environment, the EPA and DEQ have not yet established standards for PFAS in biosolids.

HB 2947 would enable a collaborative effort among the OSU scientific research community, public wastewater utilities, farmers, and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to conduct the studies necessary provide data on biosolids land application safety and risks related to PFAS in biosolids.

Oregon must do the work necessary to understand and ensure that PFAS is not contaminating products consumed by animals or people, or our soil and water. The PFAS levels in our biosolids are far below those in states like Maine and Michigan, but we need to clearly understand our state's situation so Oregon leaders, municipal wastewater utilities, and farmers can make sound, geographically specific decisions about the future of these practices in our state.

OEC urges you to support HB 2947.

ⁱ MANAGING PFAS IN OREGON: A Clean Water Agency Perspective (2022), pg. 1. Association of Clean Water Agencies.