



February 24, 2025

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Levy and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's (OWEB) agency budget. On behalf of OACD, I am writing to express full support for the inclusion of the \$5M for the Natural and Working Lands (NWL) Fund in OWEB's budget for the 2025-2027 biennium.

OACD represents the 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts statewide, which are special districts with elected boards. The Districts protect and enhance soil and water quality and habitat through voluntary conservation in partnership with rural and urban landowners and managers.

The Districts both provide technical assistance and are project implementers. They help landowners translate their conservation goals into practices and projects, particularly relevant to this discussion, practices and projects that will sequester carbon on their land.

We want to stress the importance of continuity in programs and funding in order to be successful. As landowners are learning what climate-smart practices are, and the benefits to their operations, more and more want to implement them. When funding is available one year and not the next, interest in the programs decrease. The infusion of \$5M into the NWL Fund will enable the agencies to retain technical staff that are familiar with administering the programs and sustain relationships with the individuals and communities applying for and implementing the projects and practices.

It takes time and capacity to gear up to provide targeted programs like the ones developed under the NWL Fund by the the four agencies (OWEB, ODA, ODF, and ODFW) this past year, and time for the Districts to gear up to help implement them. We will be working with landowners and organizations in applying for grants to plan and implement conservation practices under the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program and implementing projects under ODF and OWEB and working as partners with ODA, ODF, and ODFW.

We are just at the beginning. Demand is growing and there is more interest than there is funding for. We urge your support for the inclusion of the \$5M investment of the NWL Fund in the OWEB agency budget. Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrea Kreiner", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Andrea Kreiner, Executive Director
Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Andrea.kreiner@oacd.org

971-988-9929

P.O. Box 10527, Portland, OR 97297