



2/25/2025

To: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
From: Greenbelt Land Trust

RE: H.B. 5039 and H.B. 5040, Support for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) 2025-2027 Budget

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

Greenbelt Land Trust is a regional conservation organization with a mission of conserving the lands and waters of the Willamette Valley for a more resilient future. **I am writing to share our organization's strong support for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's (OWEB) 2025-2027 budget.**

Since OWEB's inception, land trusts and conservation organizations have been key partners in acquiring and protecting habitat across the State. Collectively, Oregon's land trusts have protected more than 318,000 acres of land across the state. OWEB uses lottery dollars through Measure 76 to provide the only dedicated source of statewide funding for habitat protection and land acquisition in Oregon.

Support for staffing and program continuity under OWEB's programs is critical for improving customer service, ensuring efficient program delivery and delivering on the ground conservation outcomes that support Measure 76 and Oregon's climate goals.

When considering OWEB's 2025-2027 Budget, Greenbelt Land Trust is asking that this Committee support the following three priorities:

#1. Enhanced funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program through H.B. 3131

The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) is Oregon's only program that directly protects farm and ranchlands from fragmentation and conversion to non-farm use. OAHP was created by agriculture and conservation groups in 2017 and funded in the 2022 and 2024 short legislative sessions. **These funds have led to the permanent protection of over 12,000 acres of farm and ranch lands throughout the state and leveraged record federal investment.**

On behalf of land trusts, agricultural land owners, industry groups and conservation organizations, we ask that you provide OWEB with the \$17.3M needed for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program. This funding request is currently before the Ways and Means committee in **H.B. 3131** that passed unanimously out of the House Agriculture Committee in February.

#2. Continued funding for the Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program through H.B. 3341

The Drinking Water Source Protection (DWSP) Grant Program was established by the legislature in 2023 with strong support from communities to provide grants for the protection, restoration, or enhancement of sources of drinking water through land acquisition and conservation.

There is robust demand for additional funds for this program. Last year, an OWEB survey of water providers and partners identified a total of \$34 million in existing project needs, with more than \$27 million in funding needs identified over the 2025-2027 biennium. Funding requests in the first grant cycle already exceed available grant funds. **On behalf of land trusts and the communities across Oregon working to protect and manage their drinking water sources, we urge this Committee to provide additional funding to the DWSP for the biennium.**

This funding request is captured in H.B. 3341, which would provide an additional \$5 million in funding for the program over the biennium. The bill has already had a work session in the House Agriculture Committee and we expect it to pass out unanimously to Ways and Means.

#3. Supporting staffing and program continuity through Policy Option Packages (POPs)

Governor Kotek has made clear her priorities for Oregon's agencies include improving customer service and program delivery. OWEB's Agency Requested Budget includes multiple Policy Option Packages (POPs) that provide staffing and program continuity for well established and newly created grant programs. We urge this Committee to support the following POPs that will allow OWEB to continue to support grant programs and deliver conservation outcomes across the state:

- **POP 090**
- **POP 100**
- **POP 102**
- **POP 105**
- **POP 106**
- **POP 107 & POP 108**

Thank you,



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