

February 13, 2026

Senator Kate Lieber
Representative Tawna Sanchez
Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez

On behalf of the Oregon nursery and greenhouse industry, the Oregon Seed Council, and a coalition of Oregon's major agricultural associations and supporters, we respectfully request your support for Oregon agriculture. This request is focused on addressing the immediate and time-sensitive economic and phytosanitary threat posed by the Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica*) during Oregon's regulatory transition period. Both the nursery industry and irrigated sod are in the crosshairs of economic uncertainty due to the defunding of the Japanese beetle program.

Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry is the state's highest-value agricultural commodity, generating more than \$1.2 billion in production value in 2022, and ranking third nationally behind California and Florida. This industry is uniquely interstate facing: 74 percent of Oregon nursery stock is shipped out of state, with half moving east of the Mississippi River. As a pest that feeds on more than 300 ornamental and agricultural plant species, the Japanese beetle presents a direct threat not only to Oregon producers, but to interstate plant health and market stability nationwide.

Oregon is now approaching a pivotal regulatory transition. The anticipated loss of Category 1 status will substantially increase certification and compliance burdens, particularly for producers of large-caliper shade trees and ornamental nursery stock. Current Japanese Beetle Harmonization Plan (JBHP) dip and drench treatment pathways are limited to containerized or root ball material 12 inches in diameter or smaller, a constraint that is operationally unworkable for much of Oregon's export-oriented inventory. Without targeted investment in surveillance, trapping, and treatment capacity, Oregon risks losing practical access to key interstate markets despite strong industry commitment to full compliance.

Importantly, Oregon's Japanese beetle program has been a demonstrated success. Over the past decade, detections have declined from 23,480 beetles in 2017 to fewer than 2,000 in 2025, with approximately 80 percent of detections confined to a single neighborhood. Statewide, this represents an estimated 95 percent eradication rate. These results reflect some of the highest plant health standards in the nation and confirm that strategic investment yields measurable outcomes.

However, without funding this year, this progress is at risk. Japanese beetle pressure threatens Oregon's broader specialty crop sector, including hops, blueberries, wine grapes, hazelnuts, and seed crops, with cascading consequences for interstate

commerce. State-supported eradication operations concluded in 2025 as authorized and are currently not funded for 2026, creating a critical gap. Oregon's containment capacity has effectively functioned as a firewall for the Western United States, reducing infestation pressure on California, Washington, and Idaho. Allowing that capacity to lapse would expose the entire region to increased risk.

We want to be clear: we are not asking the state to shoulder this challenge alone. The industry is actively pursuing legislative options to increase dedicated nursery-related fees beginning in 2026 to establish a sustainable, grower-supported compliance framework. The Oregon Department of Agriculture and industry partners are working to "regroove" the successful Japanese beetle program that existed prior to June 2025, including an 18.7 percent increase in nursery license fees along with our \$1.8 million General Fund request in the February legislative session. This funding would serve as a critical bridge for this transition period while long-term state and industry investments are secured.

Accordingly, we request funding to support a defined, outcomes-based 2026–2027 project that includes:

- **Surveillance:** Expanded detection and delimitation efforts to maintain interstate confidence in Oregon-origin nursery shipments.
- **Capacity:** Scalable nursery compliance and certification capacity, including audits, training, and technical assistance.
- **Treatment:** Targeted treatment of known infested areas and rapid response capacity for new detections to prevent further spread.

Trapping and treatment are the top priorities. One-time funding will provide the necessary runway for industry to finalize and implement a durable, self-supported compliance program within two years. The Oregon Association of Nurseries is actively organizing third-party trapping and treatment resources to meet 2026 requirements, a significant undertaking that cannot be accomplished without transitional support.

To ensure that this transition is conducted in full alignment with state and federal standards, we respectfully request \$1.8 million in **funding** to be directed to the **Oregon Department of Agriculture's Insect Pest Prevention and Management (IPPM) Program**. These critical dollars will allow the Oregon Department of Agriculture to accelerate a recognized regulatory effort in 2026 and 2027 shipping seasons.

Markets are already responding. Oregon's anticipated downgrade from Category 1 to Category 2 status in early 2026 has created immediate cost pressures and market anxiety during the industry's peak shipping season. As a united agricultural coalition, we believe that timely action over the coming months—paired with industry dollars—will prevent the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in agricultural sales and long-term market share.

We appreciate the legislature's longstanding partnership and respectfully request your support to create a framework to structure a fundable project that protects specialty crops, nursery production systems, and interstate plant health, consistent with Congressional intent.

Sincerely,

Oregon Association of Nurseries
Oregon Seed Council
Oregon Wine Growers Association
Oregon Wine Council
Associated Oregon Hazelnut Industries
Oregon Hop Growers Association
Oregon Farm Bureau
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers Association
Oregonians for Food & Shelter
Oregon Water Resources Congress
Food Northwest
1000 Friends of Oregon
Associated Oregon Counties
Oregon Business & Industry

Attachments:

ODA Value of Oregon Agriculture (2023)
ODA Japanese Beetle Treated Acres and Detections (2025)