

## **Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program**

### An overview of the 2017 legislative concept

#### **Purpose of Legislative Concept**

- Two-thirds (10.45M acres) of Oregon's agricultural lands will change hands in the next 20 years.
- Yet up to 80% of Oregon farmers and ranchers may not have a succession plan.
- In this transition, productive land and associated habitat are vulnerable to sale for non-farm uses, fragmentation into unviable parcel sizes, and eventual development.
- A federal program exists to permanently protect US farmland - NRCS's Agricultural Land Easement program (ACEP-ALE). Yet each year, Oregon leaves millions of federal dollars on the table because we do not have a state grant program to match this program.

#### **Formation of Legislative Concept**

A diverse coalition of agricultural and conservation organizations met every other week for over one year to develop a synergistic suite of programs that could address both farm succession and farmland preservation from development together.

The work group was convened by the Governor's office and consisted of: the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts, the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, the Oregon Farm Bureau, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Sustainable Northwest, The Nature Conservancy, and one farmer and one rancher representative.

#### **Program Elements**

- Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund - for grant programs
- Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission - to develop rules and oversee investments
- Voluntary Tools
  - Matching grants for permanent working lands conservation easements
  - Matching grants for temporary working lands conservation covenants
  - Matching grants for conservation management plans
- Grants to support farm succession workshops using OSU Ties to the Land curriculum
- Study of the effects of state tax burdens (especially estate tax) on farm and ranch businesses

#### **Program Governance**

The Program would be overseen and rules would be developed by the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission. The commission would be separate from the OWEB Board, but advisory to the Board. The OWEB Board would have to approve the funding priorities and levels set by the commission. The commission would consist of:

- Four active farmers and/or ranchers selected by the Board of Agriculture
- One member recommended by OSU Extension
- Two members recommended by the state Fish and Wildlife Commission
- One member with ag water quality expertise, recommended by the Board of Agriculture
- One member with conservation easement expertise recommended by DLCD
- One member representing natural resource values recommended by the OWEB Board
- One member with expertise in tribal interests recommended by the OWEB Board
- One ex officio, non-voting, member of the OWEB Board

#### **Status of Legislative Concept (1/9/2017)**

Partners hope that the bill will be introduced as a Committee Bill by the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. We are requesting \$4.25 million for program administration and grants.

*If you have questions, concerns, or comments, please contact any of the OAHP work group members. Contact information is listed online: <http://www.oregon.gov/OWEB/oaHP/pages/index.aspx>*

Nellie McAdams, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts representative to the OAHP Work Group.  
[nellie.mcadams@oacd.org](mailto:nellie.mcadams@oacd.org), 971.409.6806