



Oregon
Environmental
Council
It's Your Oregon

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Testimony to the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education on House Bill 5031

March 27, 2013

**Allison Hensey, Program Director, Food and Farms
Oregon Environmental Council**

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

Co- Chairs Monroe and Komp, and distinguished members of the committee:

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Allison Hensey and I am the Food and Farms Program Director at the Oregon Environmental Council.

The Statewide Programs of the Oregon University System- the Extension Service, the Agricultural Experiment Stations, and the Forest Research Laboratory - are critically important to the wellbeing of all Oregonians.

Whether you are:

- A resident of a rural community trying to ensure clean drinking water for people and good river habitat for fish while also supporting a strong local economy, or
- A parent with a child in a school where school custodians are being trained by Extension staff in Integrated Pest Management to protect kids from exposure to harmful chemicals, or
- Living in a city that is trying to create development standards to reduce urban stormwater pollution to meet Clean Water Act standards, or
- Trying to feed a family on unemployment and learning how to cook low-cost, healthy meals and grow vegetables in your garden, or
- Shopping at a local farmer's market or belong to a Community Supported Agriculture farm, and value the local, organic produce you eat from a nearby farm

The quality of your life is dramatically improved by the work of Extension, Agricultural Experiment Stations, and the Forest Research Laboratory.

We all recognize that in both our region and the U.S., our strength in the future lies in knowledge. Oregon State University's research is in the top ten internationally in a number of disciplines, including wildlife, fisheries, plant pathology, agricultural and resource economics, environmental and molecular toxicology, and integrated pest management.

Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station are often the only independent source of expertise that land managers trust for assistance in meeting both their business and natural resource conservation goals. Without this source of expertise, Oregon will have significant difficulty meeting its goals of clean water, wildlife habitat, and protecting people's health in a way that also ensures a thriving economy.

The Extension Service and the Agricultural Experiment Stations are the linchpin that connects a world class research university to all Oregonians and makes sure the knowledge developed is useful and used to improve our lives. Good research generally only happens when it is shaped by the needs of real Oregonians. Otherwise, the research isn't answering a practical need, and may not be usable or used by those it's meant to serve.

Oregon's Statewide services are boots on the ground that ensure research at Oregon State University addresses the needs of real people. Statewides faculty hear pressing issues directly from residents of communities across the state, and search for solutions.

You may be surprised that a representative of an environmental group is talking about the importance of the Extension Service and the Agricultural Experiment Stations. Don't be. These programs are critical to our work, and the wellbeing of our members. They are our link to the only source of cutting edge, independent knowledge in Oregon about issues central to our lives.

The Statewides are currently at risk due to a lack of parity between funding that ensures continuing services in the OUS, and what amounts to a practical cut to the Statewides budget through flat funding.

We appreciate the Ways and Means Committee Co-Chair's Budget, which adds \$5.7 million back to the Statewides Budget from the Governor's Recommended Budget. However, \$7 million is needed to avoid cuts to current services, which have already cut through the bone, leaving many areas and constituencies unserved.

Oregon Environmental Council asks you to add an additional \$1.3 million to the Statewides Budget, to reach the needed \$7 million in funding that will enable OSU to avoid faculty and service cuts, and continue current services in the Statewide programs.

We must ensure that these programs are not cut beyond their financial tipping point resulting in the permanent loss of essential services and the loss of the capacity to address some of the most significant problems facing Oregon: kid's health, hunger, economic instability, and the protection of our environment.

To treat the Oregon University System's "Statewide" programs equitably, and prevent the loss of critical services to Oregonians around the state, we strongly recommend that \$7 million total be added back to the Statewides' budget above the Governor's Recommended Budget.

Please protect the integrity of one of our most important resources in Oregon—our innovation and knowledge base that will enable all of us to thrive and prosper in the future. Please protect Oregon's Agricultural Experiment Station, Extension Service, and Forest Research Laboratory from inequitable cuts that will undermine the ability of these programs to support our success as a state and the wellbeing of all Oregonians.



February 27, 2013

Senator Richard Devlin, Co-Chair
 Joint Ways & Means Committee
 Oregon State Capitol
 900 Court St. NE
 Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Peter Buckley, Co-Chair
 Joint Ways & Means Committee
 Oregon State Capitol
 900 Court St. NE
 Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Senator Devlin and Representative Buckley:

The Oregon State University Extension Service, Agricultural Experiment Station, and Forest Research Laboratory—the “OSU Statewides”—are critical resources that support the well-being of all Oregonians. They are currently at risk due to the proposal to “flat-fund” them in the Governor’s Recommended Budget. This proposal will result in reduced services that benefit people, our economy and our environment. The proposed budget is disproportionate in comparison to the proposed seven percent increases for the other programs in the Oregon University System. Flat-funding these programs is particularly unfair because the Statewides cannot turn to other revenues, such as tuition, to help offset increased costs. **We urge you to add \$7 million to the OUS budget to recover funding for these critical programs.**

The Statewides are core elements of Oregon’s only Land Grant University and unique and integral parts of Higher Education. As diverse representatives of the agricultural, natural resources, and conservation communities, we respectfully urge you to treat the OSU Statewide Public Service Programs equitably with the rest of Higher Education.

More than 15 percent of Oregon’s economy flows directly from Oregon agriculture. Another seven percent is tied to the forest sector. Over a quarter of Oregon’s land is in agricultural production, with forests covering about half of the state. The OSU Statewides help Oregon agriculture and forestry thrive economically and protect our environment. The Forest Research Laboratory and the Agricultural Experiment Station conduct research and the Extension Service helps deliver tangible benefits for both rural and urban Oregonians. If like us, you care about the well-being of a significant part of Oregon’s economy, and about producing high quality,

delicious food in Oregon and if you care about protecting our health, water, air, soil and ecosystems, then you should care about the OSU Statewides.

The Extension Service, Agricultural Experiment Station and Forest Research Laboratory are the only independent, knowledgeable sources of practical, on-the-ground research to grow high-quality food and fiber. They are the most trusted, credible source of information for farmers and ranchers in advanced production methods that protect our health and environment. The Extension Service also teaches hungry Oregonians how to cook low-cost nutritious food, works with schools to protect children's health through nutritious food and integrated pest management, helps urban areas reduce their storm water pollution, helps farmers and foresters protect our rivers, and engages thousands of Oregonians in volunteer service projects throughout the state.

Our strength as a state in the future lies in knowledge. Oregon State University's research is in the top ten internationally in a number of disciplines. The Extension Service, Agricultural Experiment Station and Forest Research Laboratory are the only bridge that connects a world class research university to all Oregonians and makes sure the knowledge they develop improves our lives.

Adding \$7 million to the OUS budget will *prevent* the following results:

- Consolidating or "shuttering" one or two Branch Experiment Stations and further regionalizing Extension offices across multiple counties.
- Eliminating 30 tenure/tenure track faculty positions across all three programs.
- Redirecting faculty activities from priority state-relevant, state-supported projects focused on local commodity research needs to projects where grant funding can be obtained.
- Losing millions in research funding leveraged by state investments in these programs. Every dollar of state funding leverages another two dollars in federal, county, and private support.

We can't afford further cutbacks to the sole credible, independent source of information critical to supporting local economies and protecting our health and environment throughout Oregon.

We urge you to treat the OSU Statewides equitably, and prevent the loss of critical services to Oregonians around the state: Please recover \$7 million to the Oregon University System budget so these programs can continue to serve the people of Oregon.

Sincerely,

John McCulley
Agricultural Cooperative Council of Oregon

Allison Hensey
Oregon Environmental Council

Jim Geisinger
Associated Oregon Loggers

Katie Fast
Oregon Farm Bureau

Lisa Arkin
Beyond Toxics

Jean Godfrey
Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers

Bruce Taylor
Defenders of Wildlife

Jerry Nicolescu
Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Jeff Stone
Oregon Association of Nurseries

Jim Welsh
Oregon Cattlemen's Association

Brian Wegener
Oregon Community Trees

Christy Splitt
Oregon Conservation Network

Jim Krahn
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association

Amy Gilroy
Oregon Public Health Institute

Roger Beyer
Oregon Seed Council

Jim James
Oregon Small Woodlands Association

Chris Schreiner
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Oregon Wheat Growers' Association

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