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Testimony to the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources on House Bill 5502

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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.

Supporting Effective, Collaborative, Community-Led Strategies to Reduce Pesticides in Local Waterways

Oregon has the unique opportunity to effectively protect our rivers and watersheds by adopting a collaborative, community-led strategy to reduce pesticides in our waters. Waste pesticides can end up in our rivers, beyond their intended application or usefulness. This is true across all land uses, including urban areas, agricultural areas, forestlands, and near rights-of-way. In Oregon we have already demonstrated that we can protect our drinking water, salmon and watershed health through data-driven strategies that provide flexibility to landowners, and show measurable results in reducing pesticide run-off. These strategies include local pesticide stewardship partnerships and community pesticide collection events.

Oregon Environmental Council supports the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Collaboration Policy Option Package in Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA's) proposed budget to enable Oregon to implement these win-win strategies in the future.

A Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program will reduce pesticide run-off in our waters through two main collaborative, voluntary strategies:

1. Pesticide Stewardship Partnerships

Pioneered here in Oregon, Pesticide Stewardship Partnerships have been effective in dramatically reducing pesticides found in local waters, and benefited land managers through training in more effective, efficient pest control methods. Local land managers and community resource organizations team up with state experts at Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Oregon State University (OSU) to measure water quality and come up with voluntary solutions to improve it.

Land managers like the partnerships, because they get the benefits of our state's best expertise in pest, disease and weed control from OSU— and then they get to choose for themselves what techniques work best on their land.

Conservationists like the partnerships because they are so effective: two of the longest-running projects in the Hood River and Walla Walla Basins have reduced

pesticide detection in local waters by over 90%. Orchardists leading both projects say this approach works because it is collaborative, locally driven, and a practical way to avoid more costly regulation.

2. Waste pesticide collection events

Community collection events are simple: a chance for pesticide users to safely and anonymously dispose of waste pesticides at no cost. Recent events have collected 30-50 thousand pounds of pesticides each – keeping them from leaking, spilling, or running off into waterways.

We support a statewide Pesticide Stewardship Program based on both strategies because we see that this is the most effective way to reduce pesticides that can inadvertently compromise both human and aquatic health. This approach:

- Effectively reduces pesticide pollution in a short timeframe;
- Uses locally appropriate solutions developed by community leaders in collaboration with state agencies and OSU, who bring monitoring data and new effective pest management strategies to the table;
- Uses a voluntary approach that provides flexibility, rather than a regulatory approach that mandates specific practices;
- Costs the state less money to implement than a regulatory approach, while providing effective, data-driven results.

The **Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Collaboration Policy Option Package** in the ODA and DEQ budgets is \$1.5 million/biennium comprised of half general funds and half existing pesticide registration fees. It will support:

- 1) Pesticide Stewardship Partnership projects in ten watersheds through:
 - a) Water sampling and analysis for pesticides by DEQ,
 - b) Tools and technical assistance through OSU for landowners to improve pest control efficacy and efficiency, and reduce runoff, and
- 2) Anonymous Pesticide Waste Collection Events in 4-5 communities a year.

Funding the program in part through pesticide registration fees will NOT lead to an increase in the price of pesticides to Oregon users. We support this important budget package, and hope you will too.

Supporting a strategic Agricultural Water Quality Program that can demonstrate progress in meeting Oregon's water quality goals.

Runoff pollution is Oregon's largest remaining water quality problem, and our greatest opportunity to improve Oregon's waters and meet our water quality goals. Right now, a lack of water quality monitoring and a strategic program to show progress to meet water quality standards, mean that Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) is unable to demonstrate the effectiveness of their water quality program, or tell the positive story of agriculture working to protect Oregon's waterways.

Oregon needs baseline data and analysis to understand the condition of its waters, and strategically target its limited resources to areas that are impaired. Ongoing monitoring is necessary to measure and share progress toward meeting water quality standards, understand which strategies are effective and worthwhile, and tell success stories.

Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) supports continuation of a water quality monitoring package in ODA's proposed budget that will provide this data, and connect it to local initiatives that work with landowners to reduce runoff pollution from agricultural lands.

This package would continue a critical agricultural water quality program monitoring staff position and monitoring data collection that has occurred over the past two years. This proposal will allow ODA to continue to contract with Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to collect water quality data at 19 agricultural sites around Oregon, complementing DEQ's existing monitoring network. ODA will also continue gathering data on streamside vegetation conditions and a monitoring specialist will work with partners to share information to present more comprehensive information about the effectiveness of the agricultural water quality program.

We support this critical budget package, and hope you will too.