



February 28, 2013

Senator Chris Edwards and Representative Ben Unger, Co-Chairs
Subcommittee on Natural Resources, Joint Committee on Ways and Means
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chair Edwards and Co-Chair Unger,

Earlier this month, the Oregon Conservation Network, a program of the Oregon League of Conservation Voters Education Fund (OLCV), urged support of two specific pieces of the Department of Agriculture budget in a letter to the Ways and Means Co-Chairs: funding for the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program and funding for the ODA water quality monitoring program.

Additionally, OLCV urges your support for Oregon's Native Plant Conservation Program, which works to restore native plants and preserve them for future generations. Native plants are crucial components of our state's biodiversity and essential parts of our ecosystems, from desert to coast.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture's policy option package #330 calls for the elimination of state funding for the Native Plant Conservation Program, instead aiming to continue the program on private and federal grants alone. Unfortunately, such funding could disappear without staff to apply for grants and provide required grant reporting to foundations and the federal government. Furthermore, the failure of the state to invest in the program might affect the Department of Agriculture's ability to qualify for Section 6 plant conservation funds under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Even if work can continue on federally-designated endangered plants, policy option package #330 clearly states that conservation work on state-designated threatened and endangered plants would cease.

As pro-conservation groups, we know that one of the most successful ways to stave off infestations of invasive weeds is to support and sustain the establishment of native plant populations. That is why the Native Plant Conservation Program is an important and necessary strategy to augment the State of Oregon's many invasive pest programs.

We encourage you to include adequate funding in the Department of Agriculture's budget to protect the Native Plant Conservation Program, including its work on both federal *and state* designated threatened and endangered species.

Thank you for your service,

Doug Moore
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