



**Testimony before the Ways and Means Subcommittee
on Natural Resources
Respectfully Submitted by Jana Jarvis on behalf of
The Oregon Wheat Growers League
February 29, 2013**

Co-Chair Dingfelder, Co-Chair Unger and Members of the Committee

RE: SB 5502

The Oregon Wheat Growers League (OWGL) is a non-profit trade association representing over 4000 wheat and barley producers across the state of Oregon who are highly dependent upon the services provided by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). We find ODA to be a highly responsive, capably staffed and efficient representative of state services and are pleased to see that the budget provided by the Governor for the 2013-2015 biennium restores a level of state general fund dollars that will allow the agency to continue the work they are engaged in on behalf of agricultural producers in our state.

We have been concerned over the past few bienniums to see the reduction of state general fund dollars to the natural resource agencies in general. Agriculture is one of the primary traded sector industries in our state and had a history of support through the budget process that reflected the value of this industry. Although the Governor restored some level of general fund dollars to ODA, support for the natural resource industries falls below one percent of the general fund budget and these agencies continue to depend to a larger degree on fee-based services.

Of particular concern to OWGL is the diminished funding for the Noxious Weed program. The Governor's budget contains a reduction to the current program due to reduced lottery fund dollars which, at the level proposed in this budget, will result in the loss of three key staff positions. This program is the only statewide program that deals with the spread of noxious weeds and has proven to be one of the most successful and extensive biological weed control programs in the nation. This program is vital to protecting our state's private and public lands from new invading weed pests and maintenance of this program is the key to ensuring the quality of agricultural products exported from our state.

ODA provides value in their variety of program packages to various agricultural interests across this state and OWGL supports these programs contained in the Governor's budget. We do ask, however, that you consider providing additional funding to the Noxious Weed Program to allow ODA to continue work benefiting all Oregonians.