



HERITAGE

seedlings, inc. _____ Unusual Deciduous Species

Feb 28, 2013

To: Members of the Legislature
From: Mark Krautmann

I write with extreme concern about the Governor's budget provision for drastic cuts in the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Noxious Weed and Endangered Native Plants Programs.

With Jolly, my wife, we operate a wholesale nursery operation east of Salem that employs almost 50 year-round, adding almost \$3M in value to farm families and the economy of the Willamette Valley. We are the real people you read about in those ODA brochures.

Because our company is more than a vendor of plants, a recipient of monies for them, and we value the land and natural resources we inherited from those before us, we also have a robust emphasis on wildlife habitat restoration. This occurs on more than 350 acres of marginal land within 1,100 acres of farms we own.

I might respectfully remind those present that:

- ODA has exclusive statutory authority to regulate and determine state-wide classification of invasive weeds via the Oregon State Weed Board (OSWB). It classifies noxious weeds in several categories according to their priority for eradication, difficulty for control, distribution, and economic or habitat detrimental effects.
- Over the 30-year history of the OSWB, there are numerous examples of extremely invasive weeds such as kudzu that have been quickly identified and rapidly eradicated because of ODA vigilance.
- Notwithstanding rapid response to small outbreaks of highly invasive plants coming into the State, the hard work of controlling invasive weeds all across the state falls to ODA staff and the Weed Board. To cut the modest costs of these positions from your budget would be a terrible mistake, in my experience and common sense.
- The Weed Board annually distributes more than \$1.2 million in funds to control and eradicate noxious weeds. Without staff and the volunteers on the OSWB to coordinate and sift through weed control project applications and prioritize them according to a lean administrative process, the State risks having the same out-of-control noxious weed situation that is apparent in states all around us.
- Our Oregon agricultural average annual sales per farm is less than half of our neighbors in WA and ID, and less than 20% of CA farms. We cannot abandon small specialty crop farms in Oregon's Willamette Valley to fend for themselves with no coordinated statewide policy on classifying noxious weeds for priority control or complete eradication, where possible. To leave agricultural interests and other agencies to do this on their own would mean we basically say to those who are land stewards, to our farmers and ranchers, "*You're on your own: the public places no priority on maintaining our state as free as possible of invasive weeds that harm agriculture and public wildlife resources.*" Losses from noxious weeds create economic losses amounting to up to \$200 million annually in lost farm productivity in Oregon alone, and over \$3 billion annually across the US. Moreover, invasive weeds threaten our existing remaining populations of rare and endangered plants.

I thank you for considering that this program is a mere \$500,000 budget item within the context of many millions in budget cuts you are considering, but it is a critically important bit of "seed" investment in our productive farms, our wildlife habitat that remains among the most pristine in the country, and the tourism and productivity that accompanies these values. Finally, it is up to 15 times more expensive to control these weeds AFTER they become firmly and widely established, as compared to BEFORE they have invaded our farms and wild areas.

As a business person, I believe this is as lean a program as any in the state, and a prudent business investment in our agricultural economy that we cannot afford to abandon or cut.

Respectfully,
Mark Krautmann, co-owner

4194 71st Avenue SE
Salem OR 97301

phone (503) 585-9835