



OREGON
ASSOCIATION OF
NURSERIES

**Testimony before the House Rural Communities, Land Use and Water Committee
House Bill 2400 – Water Supply Development Fund Deadline Extensions**

By Jeff Stone, Executive Director
Oregon Association of Nurseries
March 3, 2015

Chairman Clem, Vice-Chairs Helm and Post, members of the committee, my name is Jeff Stone and I serve as the Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries. I am pleased to lend the nursery and greenhouse industry's support to House Bill 2400, which will provide the additional time necessary to complete rulemaking for the Water Supply Development Fund, which this body created in 2013.

The Economic Footprint of the Nursery and Greenhouse Industry

The nursery and greenhouse industry is the state's largest agricultural sector, and is finally seeing a resurgence following years of significant economic declines during and after the great recession. Oregon's nursery industry now ranks second in the nation, with over \$766 million in sales annually to customers in Oregon, the rest of the United States, and abroad. In fact, nearly 75% of the nursery stock grown in our state leaves our borders – with over half reaching markets east of the Mississippi River. We send ecologically friendly green products out of the state, and bring traded sector dollars back to Oregon.

Nursery association members represent wholesale plant growers, Christmas tree growers, retailers, and greenhouse operators. Our members are located throughout the state, with our largest nursery growing operations found in Clackamas, Marion, Washington, Yamhill and Multnomah Counties.

Support for State Investment in Water Resources Development

Water is the lifeblood of our industry. Our members depend on reliable access to clean, plentiful water to irrigate their plants. Our members have spent generations as stewards of the state's natural resources. We believe that economic vitality can go hand in hand with sustainability and long-term environmental health. We are deeply committed to a

forward-looking state water policy that recognizes the importance of investing in our state's water future for the benefit of all our citizens.

This body took an important step toward that future in 2013, when it passed SB 839, creating the Water Supply Development Fund. Oregon's nurseries were one of the primary supporters of Senate Bill 839, and we remain convinced that it is a good initial step.

However, there is still work to do. SB 839 set an aggressive schedule for the development of a complex set of rules needed to implement the funding bill. And while the stakeholders have been hard at work to develop those rules, we need a bit more time. To that end, we believe the extensions proposed by HB 2400 are appropriate and necessary.

Finally, HB 2400 makes a technical change to SB 839 to make it possible to seek funding to develop new water storage whenever water is available, rather than only outside the irrigation season as is now the case. That technical change is widely supported by the stakeholder community as something that is necessary to honor the original intent behind SB 839.

The Oregon Association of Nurseries encourages you to support House Bill 2400 as a signal of your continuing commitment to a stable water future in Oregon.