



**Testimony in Support of SB 657
Before the Senate Education Committee**

**March 10, 2015
Rick Gustafson, Board Member
Oregon Environmental Council**

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.

Dear Chair Roblan, and members of the Committee:

I have been on the Board of the Oregon Environmental Council for 8 years and its President for the past 4 years. I have committed to serving on OEC's Board because they emphasize environmental solutions that are collaborative, and protect our health, environment and a thriving economy.

I have been a Vice President of Shiels Oblatz Johnsen, a project management firm with offices in Portland and Seattle since 1987. I had the opportunity to work closely with OSU for many years as developed the Agricultural Marketing Center in Portland, the OSU Seafood Laboratory and Duncan Law Seafood Center in Astoria, the Food Innovation Center, and the Oregon Garden. OSU's research is world class and they are in good hands with President Ed Ray.

I was a member of the Oregon House of Representatives in 1975 and 1977 serving on Ways and Means. I later had the honor to serve on the State Board of Agriculture for 8 years. It was my service on the State Board of Agriculture that convinced me to join OEC to connect agriculture and the environment.

I am here today to express Oregon Environmental Council's strong support, and my personal support for SB 657, appropriating an additional \$16 million to the budget of the OSU Statewides. There is no better investment the state can make than in the Statewide Programs of the Oregon University System- the Extension Service, the Agricultural Experiment Stations, and the Forest Research Laboratory.

Whether you are:

- An agricultural or forest land manager trying to ensure clean drinking water for people and good river habitat for fish, or
- A parent with a child in a school where school custodians are being trained by Extension staff in Integrated Pest Management to protect kids from exposure to harmful chemicals, or
- Living in a city that is trying to create development standards to reduce urban stormwater pollution to meet Clean Water Act standards, or
- Developing buildings to meet green building standards, or

- A farmer, rancher or food business developing a new product for market, or creating a direct distribution system for your products, or
- A landscaping company trying to manage beautiful landscapes while protecting pollinators, or
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The quality of your life is dramatically improved by the work of Extension and Agricultural Experiment Stations.

We all recognize that in both our region and the U.S., our strength in the future lies in knowledge. Oregon State University's research is in the top ten internationally in a number of disciplines, including wildlife, fisheries, plant pathology, agricultural and resource economics, environmental and molecular toxicology, and integrated pest management.

Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station are the source of expertise that land managers trust for assistance in meeting both their business and natural resource conservation goals.

The Extension Service and the Agricultural Experiment Stations are the linchpin that connect a world class research university to all Oregonians and makes sure the knowledge developed is useful and used to improve our lives. Good research generally only happens when it is shaped by the needs of real Oregonians. Otherwise, the research isn't answering a practical need, and may not be usable or used by those it's meant to serve.

OSU Extension and Agricultural Experiment Stations are an effective and essential bridge between urban and rural Oregon. Food and agriculture are the handshake that unites us all. We should be investing more, not less, in uniting Oregonians around the values we share, and our interdependence.

You may be surprised that a representative of an environmental group is talking about the importance of the Extension Service and the Agricultural Experiment Stations. Don't be. These programs are critical to our work, and the wellbeing of our members. They are our link to the only source of cutting edge, independent knowledge in Oregon about issues central to our lives.

The Statewides' capacity has been significantly reduced over the last 10 years, and current budget recommendations amount to a practical cut to the Statewides budget, as the 3% increase does not cover true continuing service level costs.

We appreciate the Ways and Means Committee Co-Chair's Budget. However, last year, when the OSU Board of Trustees developed a funding request for the University, they recommended a \$16 million increase for approximately 40 new positions to power new and expanded initiatives that combine the strengths of all three Statewides. The Governor's Recommended Budget proposed an increase of \$3.3 million, which provides no funding or personnel for new or expanded programs. SB 657, which has received broad legislative support, restores the \$16 million increase to the Statewides' budget to address major challenges facing Oregon in five key areas:

1. Technologies for Business Development and Value Added Manufacturing
2. Sustainable Management of Working Landscapes

3. Ensuring Water Quality and Quantity
4. Promoting Public Health, Food Safety and Security
5. Educating the Workforce of Tomorrow: 40-40-20

We urge you to support adding \$16 million to the Statewides budget to begin to restore the capacity that has been so degraded to address issues across the state critical to all of our lives: safe drinking water, children's health, strong salmon populations, and thriving urban and rural economies that are more clearly connected with one another.

Please protect the integrity of one of our most important resources in Oregon—our innovation and knowledge base that will enable all of us to thrive and prosper in the future. Please restore capacity to Oregon's Agricultural Experiment Station, Extension Service, and Forest Research Laboratory to support our success as a state and the wellbeing of all Oregonians.

Thank you.