



Eugene Water & Electric Board

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May 15th 2015

Dear Co-Chairs Read and Girod:

I am writing to express the Eugene Water and Electric Board's strong support for HB 5030 as a critical funding mechanism to deploy the proposed Oregon Clean Water Fund to support voluntary and flexible water quality improvements on farm, ranch and forestlands.

EWEB has itself been investing in increasing the economic viability of farming in the McKenzie while helping growers voluntarily reduce chemical use and increase riparian buffers through its Healthy Farms Clean Water Program. This initiative has worked with nearly 70 farms in the watershed, including the following examples.

- Working with McKenzie hazelnut growers, the Hazelnut Commission, and OSU to reduce pesticide use in orchards by over 65%.
- Leading efforts to open local markets that tend to pay farmers more, provide food security for communities, and increased economic development.
- Investing in demonstration farm to help farmers gain access to local markets, reduce operating expenses, increase riparian buffers, reduce chemical use, increase pollination for native bee populations, as well as help beginning farmers thru apprenticeships, equipment sharing, and workshops. The demonstration farm also is education center for K-12, Lane Community College and U of O students and offers multiple internship opportunities.

An Oregon Clean Water Fund can leverage and be integrated with EWEB's own Voluntary Incentives Program (VIP) that rewards landowners for maintaining healthy riparian forests, while aligning multiple investments for focused restoration of riparian forests in degraded areas.

The VIP is currently being piloted with 15 landowners, including a number of farmers. The infrastructure built for the VIP will allow Oregon Clean Water Funds under to be leveraged with NRCS, USFS, EWEB, the Metropolitan Wastewater Commission, and business sponsorship funds for riparian improvements, off-stream watering for livestock, and other water quality improvements.

The Oregon Clean Water Fund will support and leverage existing efforts and investments to keep intact healthy riparian forests and restore others in order to mitigate impacts from flooding and increase watershed resiliency in the face of a changing climate. These landowner actions are voluntary and work well with landowner goals.

This investment in Oregon's future will help get to scale what is needed in Oregon watersheds to ease the impacts to farmers, ranchers and foresters from Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and FEM National Floodplain Insurance Program requirements.

Sincerely,

Jason Heuser
Legislative Affairs Coordinator