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**Testimony to the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee on
Natural Resources
Oregon Department of Agriculture Budget
February 22, 2017**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council supports the work of the Department of Agriculture (ODA). The Department provides essential programs and resources to Oregon's agricultural sector, and protects the health and safety of all Oregonians.

We are concerned that several of ODA's programs are on 15% cut list, and particularly concerned about cuts to the programs related to water quality. Water quality is a top concern for Oregonians, and adequate support is essential for these programs if they are to achieve the goal of producing quantifiable improvements to water quality and measurable reductions in ag-related water pollution. While we are entirely aware of current budget constraints, we feel that these important programs should be fully funded.

The Department's Agricultural Water Quality Program and the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program are important tools for reducing nonpoint source pollution in Oregon. Nonpoint source pollution—pollution that comes from across the landscape in runoff from agriculture, forestry, and urban lands—is the greatest source of pollution in Oregon's waters. We have a long way to go in tackling this challenging problem. By working in partnership with producers and collaboration with DEQ, ODF, OWEB, ODFW, the 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and other natural resource partners, ODA's water quality programs help keep runoff from agricultural lands from entering Oregon waterways. While compliance with ODA's agricultural water quality program is only a step in achieving the goal of meeting water quality standards, the program is an essential tool in the toolkit. Full funding for ODA's water quality-related programs is of the highest priority if we are to see reductions in pollution from agricultural activities and measurable improvements in water quality.

Technical assistance is a key component of both the Agricultural Water Quality Program and the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program. Ensuring sufficient funds for both programs ensures that willing producers can get the technical assistance they need to comply with our expectations for clean and pure water for all Oregonians. The SWCDs provide essential support to producers and agency staff in implementing an array of state and federal programs that improve riparian lands and reduce nonpoint source pollution from farmlands.

While OEC applauds the voluntary, collaborative structure of ODA's approach to achieving water quality improvements, we acknowledge that compliance actions are sometimes necessary. Ensuring that the Agricultural Water Quality Program has sufficient funding and personnel to implement compliance actions when warranted is an essential piece of the program.

Retaining full funding for the ODA's activities related to the Pesticide Analytical and Response Center (PARC) protects the health of Oregon citizens and the environment. PARC is mandated to perform a variety of activities with regard to pesticide-related incidents in Oregon that have suspected health or environmental effects, including collecting incident information, mobilizing expertise for investigations, identifying trends and patterns of problems, making policy or other recommendations for action, reporting results of investigations, and preparing activity reports for each legislative session. The work of PARC protects public health and the environment, as well as safeguarding producers from the unintended consequences of pesticide misapplication by neighboring operations.

The Oregon Environmental Council OEC has a particular interest in protecting funding for the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program. OEC played a leadership role in developing and advocating for passage of the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership program along with our partners at Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality and Department of Agriculture. The remarkable thing is that this program and its \$1.5 million/biennium budget were unanimously supported through the 2013 legislative process by a very diverse set of almost 30 groups representing conservation, health, agriculture and forestry. The Pesticide Stewardship Program budget passed the legislature with bipartisan support. Promoting collaborative, voluntary actions to reduce agricultural chemicals in targeted watershed has been successful in dropping detections of agricultural chemicals in the Clackamas, the Hood River, the Wasco and the Walla Walla watersheds. Similar impacts can be achieved in other PSP watersheds only if ODA retains sufficient funding to coordinate the PSPs and provide technical assistance grants for projects identified by the PSP partners. The current budget proposal reduces funding for this program from both the general fund and from fees.

In conclusion, ODA performs essential services for the all residents of our great state. We urge the full funding of their important work, particularly their water quality-focused programs. Thank you for consideration.