

Good Morning, Co-Chairs Senator Monroe and Representative Smith-Warner.

I'm Pat Malone. My wife Betty and I operate and own Sunrise Tree Farm at 24048 Maxfield Creek Road, Philomath, Oregon.

When we were starting out in the Christmas tree business over 30 years ago, we had enthusiasm and lofty goals about taking good care of our land. Several OSU Extension agents helped us put our goals into practice. Getting sound, objective advice at the right time helped us avoid mistakes.

I have talked several times to other growers who were excited about a new fertilizer program. They are so convinced that this new regimen is great that they applied the fertilizer to the whole field. Meaning no control patch - no trees that were not treated. So no way to really tell if the new program really worked. Extension Agents have done tests through the years and offer objective information on a range of topics to the growers, versus getting information from the person selling the product.

If farms and ranches are economically healthy, we are more likely to keep our farms and ranches intact. Extension helps both urban and rural folks take care of our land and water.

Extension has been dealing generally with flat to declining state support for a number of years. Extension agents have taken on larger geographic areas. Administration has gone from the county level to a regional structure. The creation of Master Gardeners and Woodland Managers was another way to make the paid staff go farther by turning growers into teachers.

In addition to these increased organizational efficiencies Benton County is voting this May on establishing an Extension Service District to help stabilize funding. If the measure passes, Benton County will be the 26th county (of 36) in Oregon with an Extension Service District.

I just turned in our taxes for 2016. We made money last year and Extension gets some of the credit. So where I sit, supporting extension is a wise investment of taxpayer dollars that has both economic and environmental returns.

Thank you Senator Roblan for your continued support for Extension. Thank you for co-sponsoring SB805 to support Extension, Agricultural Experiment Station and the Forest Research Lab programs at current levels. Please support SB805.