



WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District

February 4, 2017

The Honorable Brian Clem, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Clem and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 2043 relating to Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) weed control programs. The ramifications of not providing essential funding for ODA weed control programs are grave and far-reaching across every corner of the state. Invasive weeds are one of the top threats to protecting our valued natural resources in Oregon. Specifically, the loss of funding for the ODA Noxious Weed Program would directly compromise the economic vitality of our state. For example, agricultural and forest productivity would be immediately and indefinitely hurt by any reduction of state-coordinated noxious weed control efforts. In addition, environmental and recreational resources, which draw thousands of tourists and new residents alike each year, would equally suffer. Moreover, health hazards such as giant hogweed, which cause harmful burns to people, would no longer be kept in check through a statewide eradication program.

Locally, in the Four County Cooperative Weed Management Area, of which the West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District is a member and which includes the greater Portland Metro region, the ODA Noxious Weed Program has provided direct support for on-the-ground surveying, mapping, prioritization tools and control of the most devastating noxious weeds such as tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), goats rue (*Galega officinalis*), garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and orange hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*). All these weeds would overrun our fields, forests and meadows if strong, coordinated eradication and control programs were not in place. Further, without these programs, aquatic weed species such as *Phragmites australis* and *Ludwigia hexapetala* would be allowed to take over water bodies and shorelines to the detriment of water quality, fish habitat and lost recreational opportunity.

We here at the West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District work closely with private landowners who manage farms and forests, and we have witnessed the benefits of the impactful work set in motion by the ODA Noxious Weed Program. Without this funding— in particular for the network of regional ODA Integrated Weed Management Coordinators located in field offices throughout the state – local resources such as those provided by Soil and Water Conservation Districts would lose direction and the fight against invasive weeds would weaken. For example, here locally, the Portland Garlic Mustard Control Program leverages \$4.25 dollars of local funds for every \$1 of state funding received through grants administered by the ODA Noxious Weed Program. Losing one thread of funding threatens the entire fabric of our efforts.

Sincerely,

Terri Preeg Riggsby
Board Chair and Zone 5 Director
West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

cc: West Multnomah SWCD Board of Directors, Four County CWMA, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts