



February 6, 2017

Dear Oregon State House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee,

Benton Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) strongly supports continued funding for the Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Weed Control Program, including ODA's Noxious Weed Control Program Staff and ODA's Biocontrol Program. ODA Noxious Weed Control Program staff members are highly engaged partners in our ongoing weed control efforts in Benton County and are critical to the continued success of our programs. ODA's Biocontrol program is recognized as one of the top programs worldwide.

Benton SWCD recognizes the importance of controlling and removing priority noxious weeds in Benton County, as well as providing noxious weed outreach and education for rural and urban landowners and natural resource practitioners. The District has several programs which support these efforts including the Willamette Mainstem Cooperative (WMC), the Invasive Species Program, and the Habitat Restoration Program.

We have been collaborating with ODA Noxious Weed Control Program staff on numerous noxious weed control projects with landowners as part of the WMC. The WMC is a community-based partnership facilitated by Benton SWCD and funded by Meyer Memorial Trust, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and the Oregon Department of Agriculture State Weed Board. The WMC consists of a group of landowners, organizations, and volunteers working together to improve stewardship across all landownerships along the mainstem of the Willamette River, centered on the Corvallis to Albany river reach. We have worked with up to 50 landowners as part of these efforts. ODA Noxious Weed Control Program staff provide technical expertise on invasives species issues, control methods, and emerging early detection and rapid response (EDRR) species. ODA staff also connect us to other organizations and agencies encountering similar invasive species and EDRR issues so we can share lessons learned and reduce redundancies, which is extremely important for organizations such as ours that have limited capacity and funding.

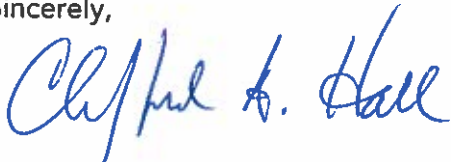
We have also been collaborating with ODA Noxious Weed Control Program staff as part of the Benton County Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) since 2010. The CWMA is facilitated by Benton SWCD with four active subcommittees that work collectively and collaboratively to address invasive species issues, particularly EDRR species, as well as outreach and education on EDRR topics important for rural and urban landowners and natural resource practitioners. ODA staff are active in CWMA meetings and ongoing discussions, give interactive presentations on important topics, and participate in ongoing outreach and education events.

Benton SWCD is concerned with the potential loss of ODA's Biological Control Program in the next fiscal year. There are strong economic benefits from biological control of invasive weeds. For example, an economic study done for tansy ragwort biocontrol showed a minimum

benefit-to-cost ratio of 13:1.¹ Another study conducted by ODA observed a minimum benefit-to-cost ratio of 34:1 for weed EDRR programs.² Benton SWCD has limited capacity and resources to address invasive and EDRR species and biocontrol programs greatly assist our ongoing programs and our community.

We respectfully request you continue to support and fund ODA's Weed Control Program in the future.

Sincerely,



Clifford Hall
Chair, Board of Directors, Benton Soil and Water Conservation District

Cc: Governor Kate Brown
State Representative Dan Rayfield
Oregon State House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
ODA Director Alexis Taylor

¹ Coombs E.R., Radtke. H., Isaacson D.L., and S.P. Snyder. 1996. Economic and regional benefits from the biological control of tansy ragwort, *Senecio jacobaea*, in Oregon. Proceedings of the IX International Symposium on Biological Control of Weeds, pp. 489-494. V.C. Moran and J.H Hoffman (eds). <https://www.cbd.int/invasive/doc/meetings/isaem-2015-01/BIOCONTROL/iasem-usa-bio-06-en.pdf>

² Department of Agriculture. 2015. Annual Performance Progress Report (APPR) for Fiscal Year (2014-2015). 2015. <https://www.oregon.gov/transparency/docs/2015/APPR's%20for%20Fiscal%20Year%202015/APPR%202015%20Agriculture.pdf>