



TESTIMONY REGARDING Senate Bill 5502:

Appropriations from General Fund to State Department of Agriculture

JOINT COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

February 22, 2017

MEMBERS

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Distinguished Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Witt, and Committee Members,

The Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District welcomes the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the proposed appropriations to the Oregon Department of Agriculture to address natural resource related issues. As an organization that works directly with the Oregon Department of Agriculture on a variety of topics including water quality and noxious weeds, we know all too well the importance of our natural resources to Oregonians.

In recent months we have learned about planned reductions to the Oregon Department of Agriculture to support noxious weed control efforts. Because we are active in regional efforts to control noxious weeds, we are familiar with the impact that these invasive species have on our local economy and natural resources.

Weeds are more than a gardener's dilemma. They threaten the livability of our communities and adversely impact our social, economic, and natural resources. One recent study entitled the *Economic Impact from Selected Noxious Weeds in Oregon* looked at just 25 of our 128 designated noxious weeds and found that these 25 species alone cost Oregonians "\$83.5 million in personal income to the State's economy" per year¹. Without active management these losses are predicted to rise to \$1.8 billion annually. These damages are disproportionately felt by our agricultural and natural resources-based producers.

Noxious weeds also impact the livability of our communities. Many of the invasive species currently targeted by the Oregon Department of Agriculture pose a threat to human health and property. Some weeds are known to cause severe rashes and burns while others are highly poisonous to people, pets, livestock, and wildlife. These

invasive weeds degrade the quality of life we Oregonians enjoy and alter the way we interact with our surroundings.

Oregon's wild lands and natural areas are also adversely impacted by invasive species. Noxious weeds displace our native plants and animals, degrade the quality of our natural resources, and result in a landscape that is less Oregon-like. This disruption of our local ecology leads to the continued degradation of our natural systems and the viability of our tourism-based economy. Oregon's natural areas generate millions of dollars of revenue from tourism each year and form a vital component affecting the livability of our communities.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture serves a vital role to the citizens of Oregon by mitigating the many direct and indirect impacts from invasive species. The assistance and tools they provide through their network of regional Integrated Weed Management Coordinators are invaluable resources that empower local entities like the Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District. Recently announced reductions in funding for the Oregon Department of Agriculture has meant that important and irreplaceable functions such as Oregon's Biological Control Program are now slated for elimination. This program alone has been resulted in a purported \$13 return for every dollar spentⁱⁱ. As you deliberate appropriations to the Oregon Department of Agriculture we ask that you please consider the vital role undertaken by the weed control program and continue to protect Oregon's most valuable natural resources.

We sincerely thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on an issue of such importance to Oregonians.

Respectfully,



Tom Salzer,

General Manager



Samuel Leininger

WeedWise Program Manager

ⁱ The Research Group, LLC. 2014. *Economic Impact from Selected Noxious Weeds in Oregon*. Prepared for Oregon Department of Agriculture Noxious Weed Control Program.

ⁱⁱ Radtke, H. and S. Davis. 2000. *Economic analysis of containment programs, damages, and production losses from noxious weeds in Oregon*. Report prepared for Oregon Department of Agriculture, plant division, noxious weed control program.