

Umatilla County Weed Department

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To: Joint ways and means subcommittee on natural resources

From: Theodore Orr, Supervisor
Umatilla County Weed Control

RE: Oregon Department of Agriculture Budget

I am writing in regards to the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) budget for the upcoming biennium. I have numerous concerns concerning the upcoming budget cycle and funding. County weed as well as other weed departments rely on ODA for various aspects of our work on noxious weed control. Over the last few years we have seen reductions in staff that county weed departments rely on. The most recent being the bio-control specialist Eric Coombs, Mr. Coombs was instrumental in the development and implementation of the current bio-control program. Without this position being filled weed departments are relying on the best guess to gather, place, and redistribute the bio-controls. Mr. Coombs was able to track the release, study the effectiveness, and make recommendations base on his working knowledge of bio-controls. It is our belief without this position being filled the bio-control program will dissolve, and the efforts made by ODA stat and weed departments will be lost.

Another growing concern we have is the GIS and outreach position working half time for another department. We would like to see this position remain a full time GIS and outreach position. Weed departments across the state depend on this position for data and information concerning the movement of noxious weeds. Weed departments use the outreach information provided by ODA to inform members of the public the growing concerns of noxious weeds. By having a full time public outreach position it allows all the weed departments to coordinate our efforts and send the same message.

The Central Oregon IVM Coordinator is stretched thin. This position was set up with a North Central and South Central Coordinator. We would like to see this position return. ODA staff is instrumental in assisting weed departments, CWMA's, and local farmers. This is a lot of area for one person to cover. Weed departments rely on the services from ODA staff for consultation, information, and support. Weed departments in Central Oregon are not getting the full attention they deserve. If the second position was returned, it would have a beneficial effect on the efforts of noxious weed departments in Central Oregon.

In Oregon we have a growing concern with aquatic invasive species and water quality. Idaho and Washington have addressed these concerns and have hired aquatic specialist. In the Columbia Basin we are facing numerous aquatic concerns especially flowering rush. With this position being created weed department would benefit immensely. Flowering rush has the potential create a strong economic impact to our waterways with in Oregon. Water quality, recreation, and irrigation could all be affected by this aquatic noxious weed. This position would be instrumental in developing plans, training, and coordinating efforts between Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.

Theodore Orr
Umatilla County Weed Supervisor