



WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District

The Honorable Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair
The Honorable Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means - Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: Public Testimony for HB 5002

February 5, 2019

Dear Co-Chair Taylor, Co-Chair Reardon and Members of the Joint Subcommittee:

We are writing to support funding for the Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) invasive species programs -- specifically the Noxious Weed Control Program and the Insect Pest Prevention and Management Program, as these programs are essential first lines of defense to preventing, or in the case of early detection, eradicating invasive species.

The West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District is a public service district dedicated to the conservation of soil and water resources for people, wildlife and the environment. Our service territory is that portion of Multnomah County west of the Willamette River, all of Sauvie Island including the Columbia County portion of the Island and a portion of Washington County that lies within an area in the north Tualatin Mountains known as Bonny Slope. One of our priority conservation goals is the prevention, early detection-rapid response and management and control of invasive species. By definition, invasive species are those introduced plants, pathogens, insects and aquatic organisms that spread rapidly due to a lack of biological controls and such spread leads to ecological, economic and social harm to people and the environment. We work closely with agriculture, range, and forest landowners and have witnessed the benefits of the impactful work set in motion by the ODA Noxious Weed Program.

Invasive weeds and insects are one of the top threats to our valued natural resources in Oregon. Any reduction or loss of ODA Noxious Weed Control and Insect Pest Prevention and Management program support would directly compromise the economic vitality of our state. Agricultural and forest productivity, to which our state commodities are so greatly tied, would be immediately and indefinitely hurt by any reduction of state-coordinated noxious weed control efforts. Our environmental and recreational resources, which draw thousands of tourists and new residents alike each year, would equally suffer. Moreover, human health hazards such as giant hogweed, which are capable of causing second- and third-degree burns to human flesh, would no longer be kept in check.

Locally, in the Four County Cooperative Weed Management Area (which includes the greater Portland Metro region), the ODA Noxious Weed Program has provided on-the-ground surveying and treatment of targeted noxious weeds, mapping and prioritization tools, and leadership and coordination. Without the support of the Noxious Weed Program, we would lose access to valuable expertise and local efforts would not be coordinated with respect to state priorities. Aquatic weed species such as flowering rush and *Ludwigia hexapetala* would be allowed to take over water bodies. Regarding aquatic invasive species, these program efforts would be greatly enhanced by the addition of a statewide ODA aquatic invasive plant specialist—as proposed by Policy Option Package #360. Again, funding support in the ODA budget for the noxious weed programs prevents terrestrial weed species such as tansy ragwort, goats rue, garlic mustard and orange hawkweed from overrunning our farms, forests and natural areas.

Oregonians also rely on the ODA Insect Pest Prevention and Management Program to detect and eradicate pests of economic and ecological concern. For over 30 years this program has successfully kept the gypsy moth (known for continuously defoliating trees) from establishing in Oregon, and there are current state-led efforts underway to control and eradicate the Japanese beetle which feeds on 300 species of ornamental and agricultural plants including roses, grape vines, blueberries, and turf. If the Japanese beetle becomes established in Oregon, quarantines and pest damage are expected to drastically impact Oregon agricultural industries. A significant, expanding Japanese beetle infestation in Washington County behooves legislators to direct resources to control efforts led by the ODA Insect Pest Prevention and Management Program.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture Noxious Weed Control Program and Insect Pest Prevention and Management Program provide a tremendous value to Oregonians, and our commodities and resources. The ODA invasive species programs are extremely effective at coordinating invasive species control efforts across all parts of the state, and with minimal staff and costs. Because invasive species multiply exponentially, even a temporary discontinuation in service would have long-lasting, irreversible repercussions; as such, we ask you to support these critical programs.

Sincerely,



Terri Preeg Riggsby,

Chair and Zone 5 Director

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

Enclosure – The Other Side of Invasive Species Pests in Oregon

cc: Alexis Taylor, Director, Oregon Department of Agriculture
West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Directors