

From the Desk of *Arnie Robles*



Help Farmers Maintain Their Drainage Ditches:

SUPPORT HB 2437B

Our agricultural organizations request your support for HB 2437B. HB 2437B allows farmers a clear regulatory process to clean their ditches. The maintenance of agricultural drainage ditches is critical to maintaining healthy, functional farmland in the wet parts of the state, particularly in the Willamette Valley and coastal regions.

- **Ditch cleaning is essential to maintain farmland.** The health of agricultural lands in the valley and the coast is dependent on maintenance of drainage through ditches that were dug at the time the land came into agricultural production. For a number of reasons, farmers have been subject to inconsistent regulation by the Department of State Lands and a new program is needed to enable farmers to clean their drainage ditches while ensuring the work is conducted in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- **HB 2437 designs a workable process for cleaning drainage ditches.** HB 2437B creates a process for authorizing ditch cleaning that is workable for farmers while ensuring that ecological values associated with ditches are maintained and protected. The bill moves the ditch cleaning program into the Oregon Department of Agriculture, requires them to consult with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife before authorizing cleaning occurs, and allows for adaptive management over time as information is developed through an OSU study.
- **HB 2437 was the result of an extensive workgroup process.** HB 2437B was developed through hours of meetings of the interim House Agricultural and Natural Resources' Agricultural Ditches Subgroup and negotiations during session. While a distance from the original proposal by the farming community, HB 2437B represents a significant compromise between agricultural and environmental stakeholders.
- **HB 2437B protects waterways and wetlands.** HB 2437B allows farmers to clean their drainage ditches and deposit the sediment pulled from the ditch onto their farm fields, where it will be thin spread and worked into the field. It does not allow fill or removal into pristine rivers, streams, or wetlands.

HB 2437B provides a path for maintenance of ditches with state oversight, is conditioned to protect environmental outcomes, and places education and compliance in the forefront.

Please Vote "YES" on HB 2437B