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February 12, 2021

Alexis Taylor, Director  
Oregon Department of Agriculture  
635 Capitol St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Maintaining Perpetual Funding for Oregon Noxious Weed Programs

Dear Director Taylor,

I write to you to in support of maintaining the existing perpetual funding of the ODA Noxious Weed Grants to combat ever-increasing challenges presented by noxious weeds throughout Oregon. If we can't continue to hold our ground against current and novel invading plants, we risk hazardous encroachment and dangerous relapses that we've spent years successfully reducing, jeopardizing agricultural and ecological resources, essentially wasting taxpayers time and money.

I am the Chairman of the Oregon County Weed Control Association. Our Association was established in 2007 to "Empower our County Weed Control Programs with the best available resources to enhance statewide collaboration for invasive plant management". That empowerment is magnified by funding provided through Oregon Department of Agriculture's State Weed Board Grants as well as by the assistance of regional ODA field staff employed to help in the fight against invasive weeds. The invaluable support made available by ODA will continue to bridge the gap between the funds each county is able to allocate to combat noxious weeds and their ability to manage invasive species across geographic boundaries.

At county levels, we have been enormously effective by working with local landowners and stakeholders to develop and sustain strong partnerships. The State Weed Board Grants allow us to pull together multiple partners across that local landscape: Private, County, State, and in some cases even Federal stakeholders. The brilliant thing about these partnerships is that everything developed in one community can be accessed and applied by any other participating community.

Two years ago, the Departments Legislatively Adopted Budget, Package 360, rated "Strengthening State Noxious Weed Program" a Priority Rank of 13. It is vital to maintain (or elevate) this rank and not lose ground eradicating weeds of National Significance. We must continue acting now to reduce current and future impacts of noxious weeds on the productivity of grazing and cropping acreage.

*Oregon County Weed Control Association - "Empowering our county weed programs with the best available resources to enhance statewide collaboration for invasive plant management."*



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As you may be aware, a 2014 ODA report stated that the cost associated with personal income loss to Oregon's State economy from 25 select noxious weeds neared \$83.5 million. That is equivalent to the loss of 1900 private sector jobs. If the remaining 112 of the 137 current listed noxious weeds are left unaddressed, the effect could be a corresponding potential cost of \$457,580,000.00 to Oregon's economy. That is a result no one wants to see.

The modest amount awarded in State Weed Board Grants exponentially reduces this amount as it is used as seed money to get others involved. I strongly urge you to preserve, even increase, the funding allotted for the advancement of Noxious Weed Control efforts across the state of Oregon. Any loss or reduction in this funding, even slightly, will have a ripple effect that will cause detrimental long-term economic effects to Oregonians and more importantly, to Oregon's natural resources, agriculture, recreation, and wildlife as invasive species management efforts play a key role in maintaining the integrity of natural areas and conservation of lands.

Should you have any questions or comments about the issue of maintaining perpetual funding of such an important program, I encourage you to reach out to any of the members of our association or to field staff that are in the fight with each county weed program.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Pettingill  
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