

Fort Rock/Silver Lake SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

April 21, 2021

Attention: Natural Resources Subcommittee, Joint Ways and Means Committee

From: Fort Rock/Silver Lake Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

**RE: SB 5502, Oregon Department of Agriculture Budget**

Co-Chairs Representative Reardon and Senator Taylor and Committee Members:

Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD serves northern Lake County, protecting natural resources through providing technical assistance for conservation on both rural and urban lands. District staff members work with landowners to provide their technical experience on project development and also provide cost-sharing on projects or staff works with landowners to secure additional funding from state, federal and non-profit partners. SWCDs are local governments with countywide elected boards.

Soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) throughout the state are statutorily linked with ODA and depend upon the agency for support in developing programs and providing support. Over the last several years, staff positions have continued to be cut in the SWCD section of ODA and yet districts are providing more extensive services at the local level in carrying out the work of the agency's Natural Resources division.

Our request is to fill the management position that was deleted in Package 090 of the department's budget. By not filling that position, the current water quality manager is expected to manage both the extensive water quality work as well as the many other programs in which districts are involved. The water quality program has also been cut from its former ability to provide support by removing two water quality specialists.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns.

Sincerely,

*Justin Ferrell*

Manager, Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD