

A-Engrossed
House Bill 2998

Ordered by the House March 23
Including House Amendments dated March 23

Sponsored by Representative HELM, Senator HANSELL, Representatives MCLAIN, BYNUM, MARSH; Representatives CATE, EVANS, GAMBA, GOMBERG, GOODWIN, HUDSON, LEVY E, LIVELY, OWENS, Senators DEMBROW, FREDERICK, GOLDEN, SOLLMAN (Presession filed.)

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure.

Creates Oregon Soil Health Initiative. Describes [*goals*] **purpose** of initiative. Describes responsibilities of state agencies and other entities participating in initiative.
[*Directs Institute for Natural Resources to convene Soil Health Advisory Committee.*]
[*Directs institute, in consultation with other entities, to develop Soil Health Roadmap.*]
Takes effect on 91st day following adjournment sine die.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

1
2 Relating to soil health; and prescribing an effective date.

3 **Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:**

4 **SECTION 1. (1) As used in this section and section 2 of this 2023 Act:**

5 (a) **“Soil and water conservation district” means a political subdivision of this state de-**
6 **scribed in ORS 568.550.**

7 (b) **“Soil health” means the overall composition of soil, including soil structure, the water**
8 **and nutrient holding capacity of the soil, the amount of organic matter in the soil and the**
9 **continued capacity of the soil to function as a biological system.**

10 (c) **“Soil health practice” means an agricultural practice that is scientifically supported**
11 **to improve soil health over time or is broadly consistent with any of the soil health principles**
12 **of the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agricul-**
13 **ture.**

14 (2) **There is created the Oregon Soil Health Initiative. The purpose of the initiative is to**
15 **promote soil health in this state by advancing voluntary and incentive-based soil health**
16 **strategies through activities that include, but are not limited to, providing technical assist-**
17 **ance, outreach, education, financial incentives or other resources and supporting research.**

18 **SECTION 2. To achieve the purpose described in section 1 (2) of this 2023 Act, as far as**
19 **is practicable and subject to available funds:**

20 (1) **The Oregon State University Extension Service and any soil and water conservation**
21 **districts that voluntarily participate in the Oregon Soil Health Initiative shall:**

22 (a) **Provide technical assistance to agricultural producers to increase voluntary adoption**
23 **of soil health practices.**

24 (b) **Promote soil health practices to Oregon’s agricultural communities by:**

25 (A) **Conducting outreach and education, including trainings for agricultural producers to**

NOTE: Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter [*italic and bracketed*] is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 promote soil health across this state's diverse regions and production types;

2 (B) Promoting farmer-to-farmer learning;

3 (C) Collaborating with local partners and agricultural producers to conduct soil health
4 demonstration projects to showcase soil health research and practices and build statewide
5 awareness and understanding;

6 (D) Highlighting existing soil health improvement efforts by Oregon farmers and
7 ranchers; and

8 (E) Supporting agricultural producers in the identification of those producers' soil health
9 goals and in efforts to monitor success in reaching those goals.

10 (c) Ensure that technical assistance, outreach and education described in this subsection
11 are accessible on an equitable and culturally appropriate basis to agricultural producers
12 across Oregon's diverse agricultural communities and geographies including, but not limited
13 to, veteran farmers or ranchers, beginning farmers or ranchers or socially disadvantaged
14 farmers or ranchers, as those terms are defined in 7 U.S.C. 2279, and farmers or ranchers
15 who are women.

16 (2) The Oregon State University Extension Service shall provide extension specialist ca-
17 pacity to promote soil health, with a focus on cropping systems or on geographic regions of
18 this state where additional support and capacity are needed.

19 (3) The College of Agricultural Sciences of Oregon State University shall train technical
20 service providers in soil sample collection and provide free or low-cost soil health testing to
21 voluntary participants.

22 (4) The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board shall:

23 (a) Provide grants under ORS 541.984 for the voluntary implementation of soil health
24 practices, including the continuation or expansion of existing soil health practices and the
25 transition to new soil health practices.

26 (b) Provide grants to soil and water conservation districts and other technical assistance
27 providers to increase their capacity to provide technical assistance and equipment to agri-
28 cultural producers to improve soil health.

29 **SECTION 3.** The State Department of Agriculture shall establish, hire and employ one
30 full-time equivalent position of soil health specialist. The soil health specialist shall coordi-
31 nate with and support the efforts of the Oregon State University Extension Service, the
32 College of Agricultural Sciences of Oregon State University, the Oregon Watershed En-
33 hancement Board, soil and water conservation districts, federal agencies, tribal govern-
34 ments, nongovernmental organizations and any other organization to support the purpose
35 of the Oregon Soil Health Initiative described in section 1 (2) of this 2023 Act.

36 **SECTION 4.** In addition to and not in lieu of any other appropriation, there is appropri-
37 ated to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2023,
38 out of the General Fund, for deposit in the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund established
39 under ORS 541.978, the following amounts for the following purposes:

40 (1) \$500,000 for the purpose of providing grants under section 2 (4)(a) of this 2023 Act; and

41 (2) \$480,000 for the purpose of providing grants under section 2 (4)(b) of this 2023 Act.

42 **SECTION 5.** In addition to and not in lieu of any other appropriation, there is appropri-
43 ated to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, for the biennium beginning July 1,
44 2023, out of the General Fund, the following amounts for the following purposes:

45 (1) \$225,000 for distribution to the College of Agricultural Sciences of Oregon State Uni-

1 **versity for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of section 2 (3) of this 2023 Act.**

2 **(2) \$480,000 for distribution to Oregon State University Extension Service for the purpose**
3 **of carrying out the provisions of section 2 (2) of this 2023 Act.**

4 **SECTION 6. In addition to and not in lieu of any other appropriation, there is appropri-**
5 **ated to the State Department of Agriculture, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2023, out**
6 **of the General Fund, the amount of \$272,234, which may be expended for the purpose of**
7 **carrying out section 3 of this 2023 Act.**

8 **SECTION 7. This 2023 Act takes effect on the 91st day after the date on which the 2023**
9 **regular session of the Eighty-second Legislative Assembly adjourns sine die.**

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