

Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District
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February 13, 2023

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

From: Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District (JSWCD)

Re: Support for HB 2998 – Oregon Soil Health Initiative

Chair Helm and Committee Members,

JSWCD serves Jackson County by protecting our natural resources through education and technical assistance to implement voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners and federal, state, and nonprofit partners.

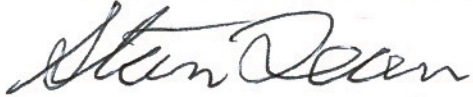
JSWCD supports HB 2998 which establishes the Oregon Soil Health Initiative. Stewarding soils is a primary function of JSWCD and we know very well that healthy soil has far reaching benefits. Obviously, it is beneficial for growth of crops and all other types of vegetation. Less recognized but very important benefits of healthy soils include increased water holding capacity, better resilience to extreme environmental conditions, better treatment and attenuation of pollutants, increased carbon sequestration, and less need for chemical inputs.

The bill has a clear mission to promote soil health in agricultural settings including rangelands and to develop a state-wide roadmap to advance the cause. We appreciate that the Institute for Natural Resources has a key leadership role in facilitating the initiative. The array of parties that will be working together as collaborating agencies and members of the Soil Health Advisory Committee will make a solid team.

HB 2998 specifically identifies soil and water conservation districts as one of the collaborating entities. At JSWCD we are prepared to help further the goals of this bill.

We appreciate the focus of this bill is on agricultural lands including rangelands and believe that healthy soils are also critical in forest and natural settings. We believe that the efforts developed within the scope of this bill can ultimately be applied more broadly.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stan Dean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stan Dean, Chair of the Board
Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District
stan.dean@jswcd.org