

Submitter: Gary Wade

On Behalf Of: Wade and Rufener Orchards Co

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure: HB2998

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

February, 16, 2023

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

I am writing on behalf of Wade & Rufener Orchards Company in strong support of HB 2998, the Healthy Soils Bill which would leverage existing programs and expand resources to support farmers and ranchers with soil health practices that make the most sense for their land and businesses.

My family and I grow sweet cherries on 110 acres in Wasco County. I am proud to be one of over 50 farmers and ranchers across Oregon urging your support for the Healthy Soils Bill. We believe it is critical to continue to build healthy soils, especially in light of our changing climate. When we remove an older orchard we will go to the extra expense and labor to chip the trees and then use the mulch on our new plantings. This practice costs somewhere around \$1,000 per acre, when we could have paid \$5.00 for an open-field burning permit. However, we strongly believe that mulching these trees increases plant health, soil health and biodiversity, water holding capacity, and probably most of all resilience in the face of a changing climate. We are also looking at producing biochar from our prunings, but the cost of permitting a curtain burner to efficiently convert wood to biochar is over \$20,000 (compared to that \$5.00 permit for open-field burning). There are new concepts and technologies that will improve soils and increase their resiliency that we need to explore; however, we need to financial support, and educational tools and guidance that the Healthy Soils Bill will provide.

Along with the multiple benefits that healthy soils provide, we strongly believe that farmers, all citizens, and State have a duty to find ways of reducing their carbon footprint. Improving soils to hold and maintain organic matter, improve water holding capacity, increase biodiversity and increase climate resilience will begin to address some of these issues and insure so that we will have a safe and stable food supply into the future. The Healthy Soils Bill will support, coordinate, and celebrate the work

that many farmers and ranchers are doing to advance soil health. It will also position Oregon to receive federal funding to take this work even further.

Please support and do all you can to advance HB 2998.  
Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Gary Wade  
Wade & Rufener Orchards Company  
The Dalles, OR