

Submitter: Beth Kittle

On Behalf Of: Wholesome Family Farm

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 Wholesome Family Farm 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.

We raise 100% grassfed Angus cattle.

I am proud to be one of over 50 farmers and ranchers across Oregon urging your support for the Healthy Soils Bill.

We have been on our 100 acre farm for 2.5 years and have had to work hard to replenish the soils that were depleted by the previous owners. We are using:

- Intense rotational grazing for even eating of plant species and spreading of nutrient rich animal waste
- Spreading the cow's winter bedding back onto pastures in the summers to increase nutrients and organic matter
- Fencing off drainage ditches through the pastures to protect Muddy Valley Creek and prevent erosion
- Bring the soil nutrients into balance by soil testing and adding minerals where needed
- Hand picking/mowing noxious weeds and adding complementary species (goats) to eliminate the need to herbicides.
- Planting cover crops and overseeding to add nutrients back into the soil and keep the soil shaded and protected
- Using complementary seed varieties to expand nutrition to our cattle and nutrition to the soil.
- No-till seed drilling to protect the fragile soil structure, life in the soil and nitrogen in the soil.

After just 1 year, we saw less bare dirt, increased summer resilience and forage for our animals. It is a long and expensive process. This year we are specifically working to add different heat-loving forage to a few pastures to extend the grazing season during the dry summer and early fall.

All of it costs money. Profit margins are tight or else you charge a higher price and don't sell as many, then there is less income. Either way, farming is expensive. Water to the pastures for the rotational grazing has been our biggest headache to overcome, but a great impact to the soils.

Education has taken a lot of work to figure what we need. Conventional agriculture is funded by huge chemical companies; however there is comparatively little personal help for farms trying to go organic and build long term soil health. I've been very grateful to OSU for having organic specialists that have helped our farm. I've been extremely appreciative of other farmers taking their time to mentor me. There are nationwide sources, however, here in the PNW, our climate is different and things like year-round grazing doesn't work. We need resources specific to our region.

The Soil Health Initiative will provide farmer to farmer education, equipment and financial incentives to farmers and ranchers who want to improve their soil health and are seeking support.

And improving soil health provides environmental benefits that serve the whole community, including improved water quality, increased biodiversity and pollinator habitat, and sequestered carbon. 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.

The inputs and work that we do today will impact our soil health for generations to come.

Please support and do all you can to advance HB 2998.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Beth Kittle
Wholesome Family Farm
McMinnville, OR