

# Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP)



**This session, support Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) POPs 215 and 115: \$10 million for grants & \$800,000 for program administration for OAHP.**

## Background

In 2022, the Oregon legislature approved \$5 million in funding to administer the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) – the first programmatic appropriation for OAHP since it was created in 2017.

This program has enjoyed significant bipartisan support, and its purpose is to protect farm and ranch land, keep it in production, and enhance its natural resource values.

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) has now opened grant applications for the working land easement and covenant program and the conservation management plan program, but renewed funding is needed to protect working farm and ranch lands and their natural resources, and bring federal dollars to Oregon.

## Oregon Farmland and Food Security are Threatened

Farmers and ranchers are at the heart of Oregon's economy. With over **37,000 active farms and ranches throughout the state**, our working lands support **\$50 billion** in annual economic impact and support thousands of agricultural-related jobs.

However, **64% of our working lands** (10.45 million acres) will change hands over the next 20 years, and more than 80% of Oregon farmers and ranchers do not currently have succession plans in place.

## OAHP Grant Programs



### WORKING LAND EASEMENTS

Compensate farmers and ranchers for protecting their land and its natural resource values. Working land easements are **voluntary contracts** between a landowner and an entity like a land trust or soil and water conservation district that remove development rights that conflict with agriculture and conservation. Landowners are compensated for the monetary value of the development rights and **the land remains in production.**



### CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS

Compensate landowners for implementing practices that conserve soil and water, enhance existing habitat, and **support agriculture.**



### SUCCESSION PLANNING

Help landowners pass their land onto the **next generation.**



### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Help non-state organizations implement the grant programs.

Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that Oregon lost **340,000 acres** from agricultural production from 2012-2017, some of which was urbanized.

In American Farmland Trust's business as usual projection, Oregon could lose up to **109,000 acres** of agricultural land between 2016-2040.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Based on AFT's Farmlands [Under Threat 2022 report](#)

## Benefits of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP)



### LEVERAGES FEDERAL DOLLARS

Last session's commitment of funds to the OAHP almost immediately leveraged a 1,100% increase in federal funding for Oregon in NRCS's Agricultural Land Easements program - an increase to \$6.7 million in 2022. This brings Oregon in line with the 26 other states that have matching working lands easement grant programs that protect farm and ranch land from development.



### KEEPS FARM AND RANCH LAND IN PRODUCTION

Easements and conservation management plans enhance both agricultural and natural resource values and do not necessarily remove water rights. Succession planning helps with intergenerational transfers.



### SUPPORTS RURAL BUSINESSES

Allows farmers to get cash from their real estate while still keeping it in agriculture. This is vital for creating financial buffers in tough times and making farmland more affordable to the next generation.



### REDUCES CARBON EMISSIONS:

An acre of farmland produces 58-70 times fewer greenhouse gas emissions than an acre of urban land and provides opportunities for activities that sequester carbon. Protecting farmland while growing cities in a compact manner reduces 33 tons of GHG emission per acre per year when compared to sprawl development.



**BENEFITS RURAL COMMUNITIES** with dollars that recirculate in rural economies.



**BENEFITS THE STATE** by supporting the state's 2nd largest economic sector (agriculture) and the rural communities, open spaces, and fish and wildlife habitat that depend upon it.



## Please Support OWEB POPs 115 & 215

**POP 115:** \$800,000 for OWEB administration and 3 Permanent FTE

**POP 215:** \$10 million for OAHP Grants in 2023-2025 to continue distributing funding for working land easements/covenants and conservation management plans and to stand up technical assistance and succession planning grants

- There is great demand for this program. In 2019, OWEB received **28 letters of interest** from across Oregon to protect 76,000 acres.
- This funding would allow OAHP to leverage a federal match for 50% of the value of a project through the federal NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), permanently protecting that land and its natural resources.
- The current Farm Bill allocates \$450 million per year in federal match funding for agricultural easements. To maximize Oregon's ability to leverage current and future funds, we need to continue to provide a **sustainable state match**.