



February 6, 2024

Ken Helm

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

Re: Support for H.B. 4060 – Funding the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

Dear Chair Helm and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Board and staff members of McKenzie River Trust, I encourage your support for HB 4060, which will provide \$10.8 million in state funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP). At the time of year when high water sometimes carries away good soil, the importance of long-term care of agricultural and other resource lands becomes readily apparent. Consistent with your leadership in securing Oregon's water resources for generations to come, incentives for long term stewardship of agricultural lands and communities offer an additional path for water conservation.

OAHP supports good stewardship of important farm and ranch lands threatened by development. The use of conservation easements and a number of planning tools help provide alternatives. This work applies in every county in Oregon. In the near term, without state funding in 2024, \$7.2 million allocated to Oregon through the Natural Resources Conservation Service could be returned to the federal government. In the longer term, the strength and economic stability of rural communities will be stressed, which in turn will stress an already challenging water situation.

I know that you have a full docket of important legislation to consider during the short session. I hope you will see HB 4060 as a high return investment that deserves passage in the 2024 legislative session. Thank you very much for your consideration, and for all of your good work on behalf of the communities of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Joe Moll

Executive Director

Protecting Special Lands

120 Shelton McMurphey Blvd, St. 270 • Eugene, OR 97401 • phone (541) 345-2799 • fax (541) 465-3876 •
www.mckenzieriver.org