

Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP)



Background

In 2022, the Oregon legislature approved **\$5 million** in funding to administer the **Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP)** – a program that helps farmers and ranchers protect and maintain or enhance conservation on working land.

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

In April, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) allocated grants for the first **\$5 million** invested in 2022, permanently **protecting 12,480 acres of farm and ranch land across the state!** These projects represent diverse geographies and operations, from a century-old cattle ranch in Lake County to historically underserved, first-generation farmers in Deschutes County who are using easement proceeds to pay down their mortgage.

Despite broad support, the program did not receive funding in the 2023 legislative session, jeopardizing **more than \$7.2 million** already committed to Oregon through the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Without additional funding in 2024, these funds will be returned to the federal government and reallocated to other states.

What Was Jeopardized by Not Funding OAHP in 2023

The missed opportunity of not funding OAHP threatened these Oregon projects:

- **14** potential projects from **6** land trusts in Oregon
- Protecting **9** ranches, **4** farms and **1** orchard
- Protecting **18,977** acres
- Fulfilling **\$11.6-11.8M** in OAHP funding requests
- Investing **\$25,992,895** in Oregon farm and ranchlands
- Variety of agricultural production: Wool, lamb, grass-fed beef, pork, wheat and grass seed, barley, organic vegetables, sheep, and hazelnuts.

Oregon is missing out on critical matching funds to protect farmlands:

- **5** projects have ALREADY SECURED **\$7.2M** from NRCS
- **4** projects will work to secure NRCS match funding



Benefits of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP)



LEVERAGES FEDERAL DOLLARS

The commitment of \$5M in 2022 almost immediately leveraged a 1,100% increase in federal funding for Oregon through NRCS's Agricultural Land Easements program to \$6.7M. Twenty seven other states have working land easement grant programs.



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.



SUPPORTS RURAL BUSINESSES

Farmers are paid to remove unneeded development rights, and can continue agricultural production. Afterwards the land is priced at agricultural value, which is more affordable to increasingly diverse new producers.



REDUCES CARBON EMISSIONS

Farmland produces 58-70 times fewer greenhouse gas emissions than urban land and provides opportunities for carbon sequestration.



BENEFITS RURAL COMMUNITIES

with dollars that recirculate in rural economies.



BENEFITS OREGON'S ECONOMY

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.

How it Works

Farmers and ranchers are at the heart of Oregon's economy, but Oregon farmland and food security are threatened by fragmentation and conversion to non-agricultural uses.

Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that Oregon lost 340,000 acres from agricultural production between 2012-2017, and could lose up to 109,000 acres between 2016 and 2040.¹

Through OAHP, nonprofit land trusts across the state work with private landowners to protect farm and ranch land from development and keep it in agriculture using working land conservation easements. These are voluntary real estate contracts between a landowner and a land trust to remove mutually agreed-upon development rights from the property, but allow continued

agricultural production. Landowners retain ownership and management of their land and can be compensated for the rights they give up.

OAHP's 4 interrelated grant programs provide critical funding for:

- **WORKING LAND EASEMENTS**, unlocking millions in federal match per year
- **CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS** and associated activities for 20-50 years
- **EDUCATION** on how to transfer a farm or ranch to the next generation, including to first generation and non-related farmers, who face challenges accessing and affording land
- **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE** to help grantees with outreach and capacity

¹Based on AFT's *Farmlands Under Threat 2022 report*

Questions?

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