

Submitter: Kyle Roerig
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB747

Dear Chairperson and Committee Members,

I am research agronomist with a farmer-owned agricultural cooperative. I have been conducting research in field crops in Oregon since 2011, first with Oregon State University, and now with Pratum Co-op. I am writing to express my opposition to this bill on several key points.

First, economic factors provide a strong incentive against over application of fertilizer. OSU has fertilizer recommendations for all major field crops grown in the state. Farmers fine tune their nutrient use rates based on these recommendations and experience. Variety, soil type, and other management factors influence ideal nutrient rates. Excess fertilizer does not increase crop yield. This is well understood by Oregon farmers who operate their farms as a for profit enterprise. Wasting money on excess fertilizer is not part of a successful farm operation.

Second, the use of the definition of fertilizer as found in ORS 633.311 in this bill is inappropriate. Many products containing essential plant nutrients which may contaminate ground water are excluded from that definition. If a bill like this were necessary, all possible sources of contamination should be included. Synthetic fertilizers actually allow for a prescriptive application, whereas non-synthetic sources come as they were generated. Thus, in order to achieve a sufficient rate of one nutrient and excessive rate of another is likely to be applied. Synthetic fertilizer as defined in ORS 633.311 can help mitigate that potential imbalance and over application. For example, my research farm has grid soil sampling done each year and individual nutrients are applied as needed based the map generated.

Third, targeting larger acreage operations does not make sense. The larger the farm, the greater the incentive and the capability to apply exact rates of nutrients. Thus, on a per-acre basis, small farms may have a greater impact on ground and surface water through over fertilization.

Finally, an additional reporting requirement for Oregon farmers is unreasonable. Farmers should be spending more time managing their crops and less time dealing with paperwork.

Thank you for considering my views, experience, and perspective on this matter. I urge you to join me in opposing this bill.

Sincerely,
Kyle Roerig, MSc.
Research Agronomist
Pratum Co-op