



## **Testimony in Support of SB 747 to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire**

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Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

We are writing today to urge your support for SB 747, a common sense proposal to protect water quality from over-application of fertilizer on irrigated farmland over 200 acres in size.

We are ranchers raising grass fed beef and goat, as well as pasture raised pork and hay on nearly 70 acres in the Scio area. We have surface water rights on over 50 of these acres and utilize irrigation for pasture management during the summer months and early fall. After taking soil tests, we determine what our fertilizer needs are and apply fertilizer in accordance with OSU extension recommendations for hay and pasture land in western Oregon. We keep detailed records of how much fertilizer we apply and on which acres. This is very easy information to track.

In reality, most farmers do the same. With the high price of many fertilizers, there is typically not a financial incentive to over-apply. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case and as a result, some areas of the state have been designated as Groundwater Management Areas due to excess agriculture-related nitrogen contaminating groundwater supplies. And in situations where a producer of excess waste in the form of livestock manure, food processing waste-water, or even municipal sewage sludge is unable to manage their own nutrients, they may contract with or pay farms to take this nutrient-rich waste off their hands, which can create a financial incentive to over-apply nutrients that end up in ground and surface water.

In the well documented case of the Umatilla Groundwater Management Area, which boasts large food processing facilities and some of the state's largest confined animal feeding operations, there has been a years-long pattern of significant and negligent overapplication of nutrients that has put groundwater and human health at risk.

For those larger 200 acre-plus irrigated farms already watching and documenting their fertilizer use closely - as the vast majority of them likely already do - this bill will provide virtually no extra burden. For those who do not, it's time to come into the 21st century and be the good neighbors the rest of the agricultural community and your rural counterparts need you to be.

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