

Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

An overview of HB 3249



Also endorsed by:



Extension Service



The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) would help Oregon farmers and ranchers plan for succession and maintain agricultural land for future generations. It includes funding for working lands easements, covenants, and conservation management plans, as well as succession trainings and a tax study.

Why is OAHP Needed

- Two-thirds (10.45M acres) of Oregon's agricultural lands will change hands in the next 20 years, yet up to 80% of Oregon farmers and ranchers may not have a succession plan.
- In this transition, productive land and associated habitat are vulnerable to sale for non-farm uses, fragmentation into unviable parcel sizes, and eventual development.
- A federal program exists to permanently protect US agricultural land - NRCS's Agricultural Land Easement program (ACEP-ALE). Yet each year, Oregon leaves millions of federal dollars on the table because we do not have a state grant program to match this funding.

How was OAHP Created

A diverse coalition of agricultural and conservation organizations met for over one year to develop a synergistic suite of programs to address both farm and ranch succession and land preservation.

The Governor's office convened the work group, which consisted of: the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts, the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, the Oregon Farm Bureau, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Sustainable Northwest, The Nature Conservancy, and one farmer and one rancher representative.

OAHP Elements

- Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund – to fund program components
- Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission - to develop rules and oversee investments
- Matching grants for three types of voluntary conservation projects
 - Permanent working lands conservation easements
 - Temporary working lands conservation covenants
 - Conservation management plans
- Succession planning workshops using OSU Ties to the Land curriculum
- Study of the effects of state tax burdens (especially estate tax) on farm and ranch businesses

OAHP Governance

The Program would be overseen and rules would be developed by the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission. The commission would be separate from the OWEB Board, but advisory to the Board and would consist of:

- Four active farmers and/or ranchers selected by the Board of Agriculture
- One member recommended by OSU Extension
- Two members recommended by the state Fish and Wildlife Commission
- One member with ag water quality expertise, recommended by the Board of Agriculture
- One member with conservation easement expertise recommended by DLCD
- One member representing natural resource values recommended by the OWEB Board
- One member with expertise in tribal interests recommended by the OWEB Board
- One ex officio, non-voting, member of the OWEB Board

Status of HB 3249

The bill passed out of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, and has received a subsequent referral to the Joint Ways & Means Committee.

Contact any OAHP work group member with questions: oregon.gov/OWEB/oahp/pages/index.aspx