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PRESS RELEASE

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Oregon Working Lands Receive Historic Investment

More than \$6.7 million comes to Oregon to protect high-value agricultural lands

PORTLAND, OR – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced that it will be awarding \$6,765,000 to fund Oregon land protection projects as part of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE).

This unprecedented investment in agricultural lands in Oregon will fund working land conservation easements – voluntary legal agreements that remove development rights and help protect soil health and water quality while keeping land in farming and ranching. Demand for working land easements is increasing in Oregon. This year alone, land trusts are seeking to protect approximately 15,000 acres of ecologically and economically valuable farm and ranch lands across six counties.

"Oregon is lucky to have extremely productive farm and ranch lands, and many of these places are at risk to conversion and fragmentation," said Kelley Beamer, Executive Director of the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts, "This momentous investment will help land trusts partner with landowners to protect well-managed agricultural lands and the community benefits they provide."

In fiscal year 2022, ACEP-ALE received a record-breaking number of proposals in the state of Oregon, fueled in part by the newly-funded [Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program](#), designed to match the federal ACEP-ALE program. Because of increased demand for conservation projects, NRCS ramped up its funding to Oregon by 1,100% from just \$590,060.

"The increased NRCS funding for working land easements is an incredible boon to Oregon’s agricultural community and rural economies. The farmers and ranchers our land trust works

with across the state have been waiting for the opportunity to protect their working lands,” said Nellie McAdams, Executive Director of Oregon Agricultural Trust. “With this allocation, and hopefully future allocations, we’ll be able to help protect their land, keep it in production, and pass it on to future generations at a much larger scale than at any time in Oregon’s history.”

Protection of key agricultural land in Oregon is more important than ever as a generation of farmers face retirement, and the State faces pressure from low-density development, population growth, and rural landowner succession challenges.

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About the Coalition for Oregon Land Trusts

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT) serves and strengthens the land trust community in Oregon. At COLT, we build connections and advance policies that help protect our natural world—our water, wildlife and open space—for all people, forever.

This work helps our coalition members—30 conservation organizations around the state—do what they do best: protect wildlife and wild places, defend working farms and forests, provide recreation and parks, drive climate solutions and science, champion clean water for all and engage communities to protect our natural world.

About the Oregon Agricultural Trust

Oregon Agricultural Trust (OAT) is a statewide, agricultural land trust that partners with farmers and ranchers to protect agricultural lands for the benefit of Oregon’s economy, communities, and landscapes. Our programs for Land Protection, Public Engagement, and Education address the interrelated challenges of: 1) the loss of agricultural (ag) land to fragmentation and development; and 2) the difficulty of passing ag land to the next generation, including new and diverse farmers and ranchers.

Project photos available upon request

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