



The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

Background

Oregon's diverse farm and ranch lands are the cornerstone of the state's economy and rural communities, providing myriad environmental benefits. More than one-quarter of Oregon's 63 million acres are private working lands that produce agricultural crops valued at \$5.4 billion annually — the state's second-largest economic driver. At the same time, well managed agricultural lands support valuable fish and wildlife habitat and other natural resources.

For over 40 years, Oregon's unique land use program has helped protect working landscapes. Yet even with a strong economic position and existing state protections, farm and ranch land is increasingly challenged by fragmentation of parcels, conversion to non-farm uses, and the expense and complexity of intergenerational transfer.

To begin to address these challenges, the Oregon Legislature passed the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP, HB 3249) in 2017.

What does OAHP do?

Administered by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), OAHP:

1. Establishes grant programs to support working farms and ranches while also maintaining or enhancing fish and wildlife habitat and other natural resource values. Grant programs for landowners are:
 - a. Annual payments for 20-50 years to implement **conservation management plans**
 - b. **Working land conservation covenants** that prevent development for 20-50 years
 - c. **Working land conservation easements** that permanently prevent development
 - d. Grants to programs that assist agricultural landowners with **succession planning**
2. Establishes a **Technical Assistance grant** program to improve the capacity of entities that enter or propose to enter into agreements to hold plans, covenants, and/or easements.
3. Establishes the **Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund** to pay for the above grant programs
4. Directs the Legislative Policy and Research Office to **study the effects of Oregon's tax policy** on agricultural land transfer and succession planning.
5. Establishes the **Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission** to oversee the program and make funding recommendations to OWEB's Board.



OAHP Grant Programs

The 2017 Oregon Legislature authorized funding only for the establishment of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program – its commission and its rules. There is currently no funding for OAHP’s grant programs. However, once established, the OAHP grants to landowners must:

- Have matching contribution of cash, in-kind services, or another form of investment, which may not be duplicative of OAHP’s funding towards the project;
- Be reviewed by technical committees established by the OAH Commission;
- Be evaluated based upon statutory and regulatory ranking criteria (below); and
- Be reviewed and recommended for funding by OAH Commission to the OWEB Board for concurrence based on availability of funding.

Statutory Ranking Criteria for Grant Applications

The ranking of a plan, covenant or easement will be based on criteria including, but not limited to:

- a. The extent to which the project would protect, maintain or enhance farming or ranching on working land;
- b. The extent to which the project would protect, maintain or enhance fish or wildlife habitat, improve water quality or support other natural resource values;
- c. The extent to which the project would protect agricultural outcomes, benefits or other investment gains;
- d. The capacity and competence of the organization that filed the application;
- e. The extent to which the benefit to the state may be maximized, based on the ability to leverage grant moneys with other funding sources and on the duration and extent of the project; and
- f. The extent and nature of project impacts on owners or operators of neighboring lands.

OAHP Status Update

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board will vote on the members of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission at their board meeting on January 31.

Thereafter, the Commission will begin drafting program rules through the summer of 2018. A list of Commissioners as well as meeting schedules, agendas and materials will be posted on OWEB’s OAHP website. To receive email updates on the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission, subscribe to GovDelivery on OWEB’s website and click on the “Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program” box.

Website: <http://www.oregon.gov/OWEB/oaHP/pages/index.aspx>

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