

Oregon State Board of Agriculture
August 2022

Written Public Comments

Item	Name	Topic	Date Received
Item 01	James Fraser Trout Unlimited	ODA Budget	08/10/2022
Item 02	Karen Lewotsky Oregon Environmental Council	ODA Budget	08/11/2022



August 10, 2022

Oregon Board of Agriculture
635 Capitol St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
Via email to karla.valness@oda.oregon.gov

**Re: Support for Agricultural Water Quality Budget Package
(August 17, 2022 Meeting, Agenda Item 2)**

Dear Chair Harper, Vice Chair Santamaria, and Members of the Board,

Trout Unlimited (TU) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of coldwater fish (such as trout, salmon, and steelhead) and their habitats. Our organization has more than 350,000 members and supporters nationwide, including many members in Oregon. TU is committed to caring for Oregon rivers and streams so future generations can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon.

TU participated in stakeholder meetings with Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) staff in recent months about the 2023-2025 ODA Agency Request Budget, and viewed the May 2022 presentations by ODA staff to the Board regarding the Agricultural Water Quality Management Program and development of a 2023-2025 ODA budget.

Based on our review and consideration of those items, TU strongly supports the policy option package (POP) that would add capacity and technical assistance resources to the Ag Water Quality program in the form of 7 FTE and approximately \$1.4MM next biennium.

In the “2023-2025 ODA Agency Request List” (which was included in the Board’s May meeting materials), this POP was described as part of “Pkg 3##” and would have provided only 2 FTE and approximately \$500,000 in LF to the program. However, we understand that as recently as early July, ODA staff proposed increasing this POP to 7 FTE and approximately \$1,400,000 for the Ag Water Quality program.

TU supports the more robust iteration of the POP that ODA staff was considering as recently as last month. We encourage ODA staff and the Board of Agriculture to prioritize and maintain that version of the POP in the agency’s request budget that ODA sends to the Governor. By adding program staff (including a field manager, riparian and groundwater specialist, and multiple region-specific water quality specialists), the Ag Water Quality program will have more capacity to (1) provide assistance to landowners in preventing pollution from rural lands, and (2) collaborate on meaningful projects that improve water quality for economically and culturally valuable fisheries. We expect that to provide dividends to fish, wildlife, and rural communities.

Thank you for considering these comments, and please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

James Fraser
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Trout Unlimited
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Re: Support for Agricultural Water Quality Budget Package
(August 17, 2022 Meeting, Agenda Item 2)

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Dear Chair Harper, Vice Chair Santamaria, and Members of the Board,

Oregon Environmental Council strongly supports increasing the capacity and technical assistance resources to the Ag Water Quality program.

Earlier renditions of the ODA draft ARB included only 2 FTE and approximately \$500,000 in LF to the program. More recently, ODA staff made an improvement to that POP, increasing the ask to 7 FTE and approximately \$1.4MM next biennium.

OEC has worked with ODA's Ag Water Quality Program for many years, and we want to see this program strong enough to deliver water quality improvements across Oregon's working lands. Increasing the program's capacity by adding a field manager, riparian and groundwater specialist, and multiple region-specific water quality specialists will increase ODA's ability to deliver positive water quality outcomes that benefit fish, farms and people.

We encourage ODA staff and the Board of Agriculture to prioritize and maintain the improved version of the POP in the agency's request budget that ODA sends to the Governor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Lewotsky". The signature is stylized and includes a large, looped flourish at the end.

Karen Lewotsky
Water Policy Director
Rural Partnerships Initiative Lead
karenl@oeonline.org