



OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE

# 2025

# Report to the

# Environmental

# Justice Council



# Message from the Director

Dear members of the Oregon Environmental Justice Council,

I am honored to submit the Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) 2025 Report to the Oregon Environmental Justice Council. As a department rooted in Oregon's rich agricultural heritage, we administer over 38 individual programs that impact nearly every aspect of our food system. That call to action is not one we take lightly, and our impact on our shared natural resources and those who manage them is something that guides all of our work at ODA. We recognize that meaningful progress requires not only clear goals and objectives, but also deep listening and a high level of accountability to our communities most impacted by environmental and economic disparities.

When I returned to ODA in 2023 as Director, I led the development of our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan. One question guided that development and continues to shape and inspire our work across ODA: "How do we eliminate barriers so all people in Oregon can thrive?"

In 2025, we made tremendous progress on the rules to manage groundwater nitrogen contamination in the Lower Umatilla Basin Ground Water Management Area (LUBGWMA). A joint effort between ODA, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD), Oregon Health Authority (OHA), local agencies, and The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), this ongoing task has given us a roadmap for future rulemaking efforts and epitomizes ODA's commitment to ensuring a resilient tomorrow for generations to come.

As we look ahead to 2026, I am excited about modernizing ODA's technological infrastructure through our OneODA initiative. Improving access to our services, streamlining processes, and improving our internal systems infrastructure will help create a more equitable experience for all at ODA.

If you have questions about anything in this report, please reach out to our new Environmental Justice Council Liaison, John Boyes at [John.Boyes@oda.oregon.gov](mailto:John.Boyes@oda.oregon.gov) or 971.719.1418.



Lisa Charpilloz Hanson  
Director



# About ODA

ODA is responsible for over 38 individual programs that serve Oregon's 35,000 farms and ranches, but our services impact every Oregonian. From the grass in your front lawn to the flour in your favorite homemade cookies, we bring the bounty of Oregon's harvest to households around the world.

## VISION

A resilient tomorrow for generations to come.

## MISSION

*Protect. Promote. Prosper.*

We safeguard Oregon's agriculture, natural resources, working lands, economies, and communities through assistance, compliance, and market support.



## OUR VALUES



### Approachable

Accessible and friendly, fostering a welcoming environment



### Genuine

Sincere in interactions, emphasizing honesty and integrity



### Growth-Oriented

Committed to continuous improvement and development



### Inclusive

A culture that ensures the dignity of every individual is honored, heard, valued, and respected



### Experts

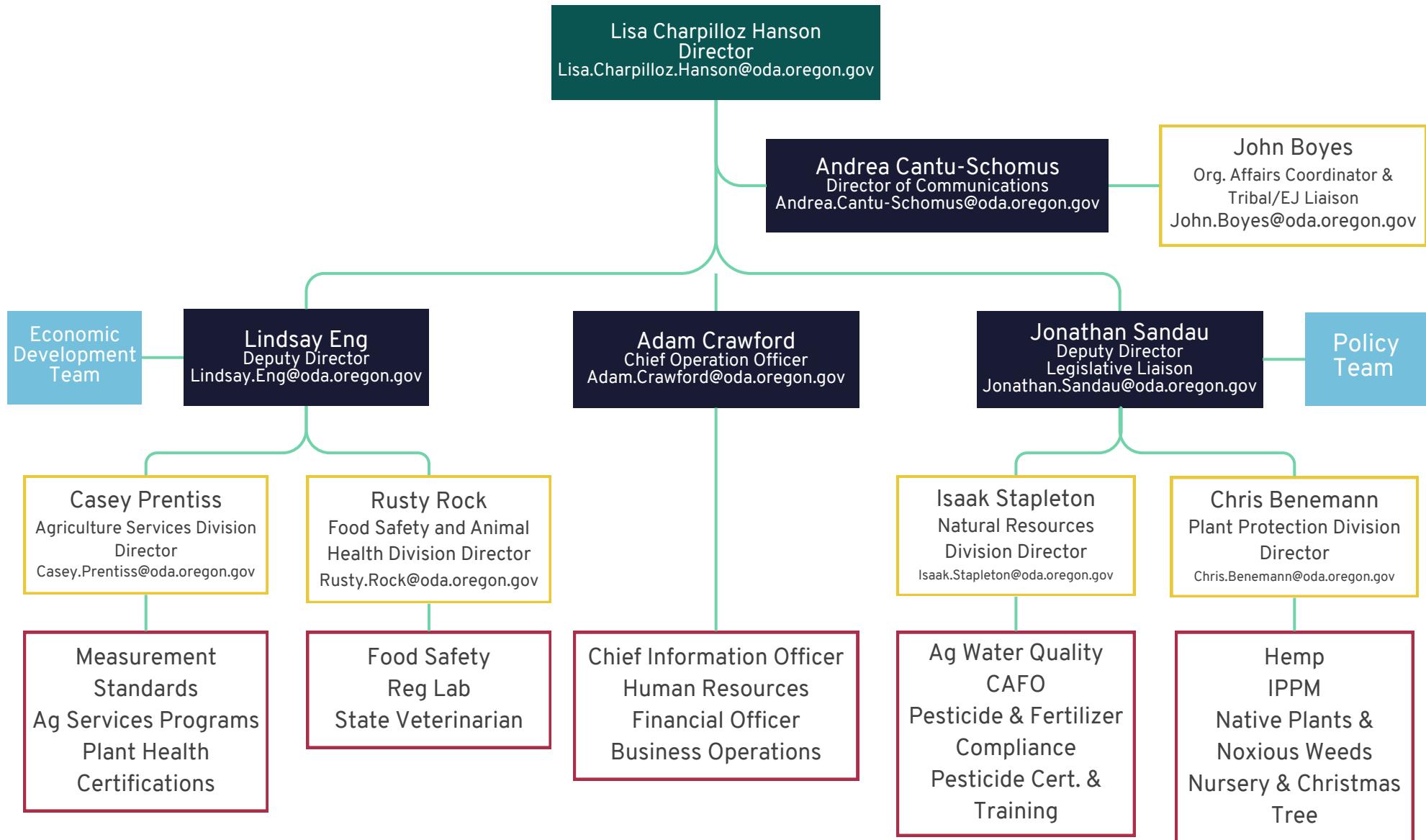
Driven by professional and scientific competency



### Sustainable

Building strong relationships and continuity for a resilient tomorrow

# ODA Leadership and Contact Information



# Equity Statement

ODA promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in our work. While recognizing historical disparities of the past, we make it our responsibility to:

- Create an environment where every staff member feels recognized, valued, and empowered to contribute to our agency's mission.
- Provide culturally responsive services to the people of Oregon, fostering collaborative partnerships.
- Implement policies and actions prioritizing equity for all people in Oregon, support robust agricultural and food economies, and promote environmental stewardship and sustainability.

To demonstrate our dedication to equity, we commit to:

- Provide equity in the allotment and use of ODA resources.
- Regularly review and transform our policies, procedures, systems, and practices to reflect our faithfulness to diversity and inclusion.
- Align our core values with our commitment to cultivating a workplace culture rooted in equity and belonging.

ODA commits to integrating equity into our identity, ensuring we are recognized as an agency that protects, promotes, and prospers.



## Environmental Mapping Tool Involvement

ODA's Environmental Justice Council Liaison regularly participates in EJ Mapping Tool work group meetings. Additionally, ODA has provided data to support the development of two potential indicators for use in the tool including:

- Shellfish harvesting closure locations in coastal communities.
- Water quality permitting information for Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

## Related Legislation & Citations

ODA did not have statutory language from the 2025 legislative session that explicitly referenced the Environmental Justice Council.

## EJ Council Engagement with ODA

ODA welcomes continued collaboration with the EJC in 2026, including:

- Helping clarify and identify EJ priorities throughout the state.
- Providing guidance to strengthen outreach and engagement practices.
- Improving connections with EJ stakeholders.
- Finalizing the EJ Mapping Tool for use by state agencies.



# Report Overview

This year's report to the Environmental Justice Council looks different: demonstrating ODA's operational culture and decision-making approach through the lens of one significant, place-based rulemaking effort. Over the course of 2025, ODA developed rules to manage groundwater nitrate levels in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area (LUBGWMA) in Morrow and Umatilla Counties.

The LUBGWMA rulemaking process provides a clear example of how ODA:

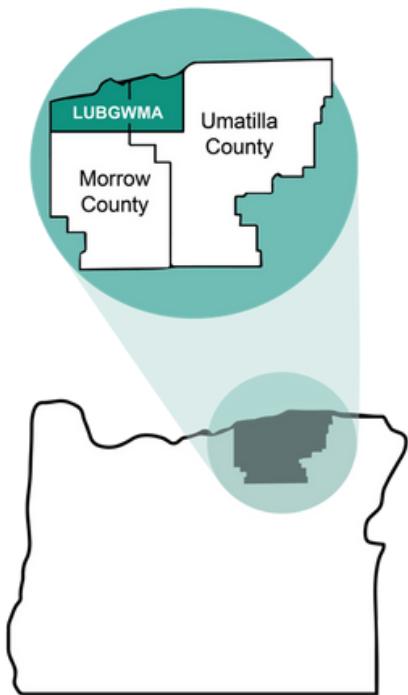
- Identifies issues.
- Engages affected communities.
- Collaborates across agencies and communities.
- Works toward durable solutions.
- Promotes transparency.

This report walks through the LUBGWMA rulemaking process and demonstrates how EJ principles informed outreach, collaboration, engagement, and issue resolution at every stage.

To learn more about how ODA partners with the federally recognized Tribes in Oregon, access our annual Government-to-Government Report on our website: [oregon.gov/oda](http://oregon.gov/oda).



# LUBGWMA History



## Overview:

550 square miles in Morrow & Umatilla Counties.

Designated a Groundwater Management Area in 1990 by Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Reliance on private wells makes groundwater quality a direct public health issue.

Historically high levels of groundwater nitrate from many sources, including:

- Residential septic systems.
- Food processing wastewater reuse.
- Irrigation practices.
- Livestock management practices.

Since its designation, the LUBGWMA has served as a focal point for coordinated state and local groundwater protection efforts. The State Nitrate Reduction Plan (NRP) completed in 2024 functions as the primary framework for interagency collaboration among:

- Oregon Health Authority (OHA).
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).
- Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA).
- Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD).
- Local regulatory agencies.

The NRP outlined strategies to reduce nitrate concentrations through regulatory updates, monitoring, technical assistance, and sustained community engagement. Rulemaking was an action identified in the NRP for ODA's Agriculture Water Quality Program. ODA began the rulemaking to establish groundwater quality regulations for the LUBGWMA in 2025.

# Understanding Who is Affected and How to Engage Them

## Defining Scope

The Nitrate Reduction Plan identified several agricultural sources of groundwater nitrate, including:

- Agricultural nutrient application,
- Irrigation practices, and
- Livestock management practices.

Additionally, collaborators identified that these impacts affect residents relying on private wells.



## Identifying Affected & EJ Communities

Leveraging prior stakeholder analyses conducted through the work of the Nitrate Reduction Plan, ODA identified that LUBGWMA communities included:

- Low-income, rural residents,
- Farmworker families, and
- Families who speak English as a second language.

While no formal LUBGWMA EJ definition was created, ODA applied statewide EJ guidance that considered the income, language access, rural isolation, and disparate environmental exposure when evaluating community impacts for 2025's rulemaking efforts.

## Planning, Outreach, & Feedback

Proactive outreach strategies that ODA implemented based on this stakeholder analysis included:

- Recruiting a Rules Advisory Committee that represented a diverse group of stakeholders.
- Partnering with local community organizations to communicate rulemaking efforts with the public.
- Hosting informational sessions and formal hearings in the LUBGWMA in the evenings and virtually to allow maximum participation from LUBGWMA residents.
- Offering translated materials and interpretation services at meetings and during public comment periods.
- Integrating feedback into the proposed rules throughout the process.

# Outcomes, Strategic Alignment, and Continuous Improvement

## Applying ORS 182.545 through Rulemaking Processes

Throughout the LUBGWMA rulemaking process, ODA applied the principles of ORS 182.545 by utilizing community input, technical expertise, and interagency coordination to define scope and refine outcomes. Feedback from stakeholders informed adjustments that improved nutrient management requirements, increased clarity, and supported practical implementation for regulated entities.

Community feedback during the rulemaking process was integral in helping ODA identify the potential effects on those affected communities.

## Adaptive, Place-Based Approach

ODA recognizes that effective environmental protection and remediation require ongoing evaluation and responsiveness. By leveraging a place-based lens, ODA was better able to calibrate outreach efforts and rule development to meet the needs of communities directly impacted.



## Next Steps

Rule finalization is still ongoing as of the date of this report, but once rules become final, ODA will transition to implementation support within the LUBGWMA. Key activities will include:

- Assisting farmers and livestock producers with nutrient management planning.
- Supporting nitrogen application tracking.
- Promoting irrigation management practices that reduce leaching into groundwater.
- Conducting routine compliance and complaint investigations.

## Strategic Alignment & Lasting Impact

The LUBGWMA rulemaking advances ODA's strategic goals by protecting water quality, preserving resilient agricultural systems, and strengthening partnerships with agencies and local communities. ODA's customer-focused, continuous improvement model demonstrates how Oregon's EJ statutes inform regulatory approaches to mitigate environmental health risks.

Lessons from the LUBGWMA rulemaking process will continue to inform ODA's work across Oregon's agricultural and rural landscapes.

# OTHER AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS



# Ag Economic and Trade Development

## Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grants

USDA's Agriculture Marketing Service's (AMS) Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Grants build resilience across the middle of the food supply chain, which includes processing, aggregating, storing, wholesaling, and distributing food products. Funding for this program was made available from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, allowing AMS to enter into cooperative agreements with state agencies, commissions, or departments responsible for agriculture, food processing, seafood, or food system and distribution activities.

### ***Statewide RFSI Investments***

- \$3.8 million in total funding awards.
- 26 projects across the state.
- 2 projects on Reservations (CTUIR & Warm Springs).

## Agricultural Workforce Housing Grant Program

In 2023, the Oregon Legislature allocated \$5 million to ODA for the Oregon Agriculture Workforce Housing Grant (OAWFG). This program funds a grant program to provide financial help to improve the health and safety of existing housing for agricultural workers and their families.



### ***2025 OAWFG Grants Awarded***

- 108 grants total.
- 66 different farming operations.

# Natural Resources Division

## Pesticides Program

### *Educating Integrated Pest Managers at Oregon's Schools*

#### Oregon School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Law

The Oregon School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Law became effective in 2012. It helps promote a healthy school environment by setting minimum standards for pest management practices, which include restrictions on pesticide use and requirements for notification and record keeping.

School Boards are responsible for:

- Adopting an IPM plan.
- Designating an IPM coordinator.
- Developing a process for responding to inquiries and complaints.
- Adopting a list of low-impact pesticides.
- Implementing a process for conducting outreach to the school community.

Anyone who applies pesticides on school campuses MUST be licensed by ODA and meet all of ODA's other requirements.



#### 2025 Accomplishments

- Presenting at ten OSU School IPM Coordinator Trainings.
- Publishing an additional School IPM Law learning module to YouTube.
- Ensuring published training modules are also available in Spanish.

# Agriculture Services Division

*Realigning agency resources to meet the needs of rural Oregonians*

## Cross-Program Training and Service Delivery

Oregon's rural communities are a vital contributor to the food supply system. However, remote locations and smaller populations can also mean limited government services compared to more populated areas. ODA's Agriculture Services Division have been champions for change over the course of 2025.

In a time when resources are limited, ODA is realigning its service delivery approach to better suit the needs of rural communities. To achieve customer-focused strategic goals, ODA is leveraging existing resources throughout the state to provide continuity of services for producers in rural locations.

## Deconstructing Program “Silos”

Rather than assigning responsibilities by specific program, ODA is piloting a regional approach, utilizing existing full-time staff and cross-training them so they are capable of providing services across multiple programs.

Stable, consistent service delivery is crucial to ensuring Oregon's harvest can make its way to households across the globe.

ODA is continuing to develop new and more efficient ways of providing inspection services, certification services, and overall assistance with ODA's programs.



## Pilot Program Wins

- Stable, consistent program service delivery in rural parts of Oregon.
- Strengthened response capabilities to address emerging animal health issues, like Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).
- Maintenance of institutional knowledge.