



## COALITION OF OREGON LAND TRUSTS

2540 NE MLK JR BLVD, PORTLAND, OR 97212 • 503-719-4732 • OREGONLANDTRUSTS.ORG

June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board  
775 Summer Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Members of the Board,

On behalf of the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT), we appreciate the opportunity to provide public comments on the proposed rules for the Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program.

COLT is a nonprofit membership organization that serves and strengthens the land trust community in Oregon by building connections and advancing policies that help protect our natural world. We represent 31 member organizations including land trusts, soil and water conservation districts, and conservation organizations working to protect clean water, fish, and wildlife habitat across the state. Our statewide community of land trusts cover geographies across Oregon, and are actively working with communities and water suppliers to protect drinking water sources using voluntary, market-based land conservation tools.

During the 2023 legislative session, we worked in close partnership with Sustainable Northwest and our legislative champions to build support for the creation of a grant program that would protect, restore, and enhance sources of drinking water. The program represents a proactive state investment in building resilient drinking water sources for Oregon's communities. Through our shared work, we were able to activate six communities in advocating for this



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**24 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** Blue Mountain Land Trust • Center for Natural Lands Management • Columbia Land Trust  
Deschutes Land Trust • Ducks Unlimited • Forest Park Conservancy • Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust  
Greenbelt Land Trust • Klamath Lake Land Trust • Lower Nehalem Community Trust • McKenzie River Trust  
North Coast Land Conservancy • Northwest Rangeland Trust • Oregon Agricultural Trust • Oregon Desert Land Trust  
Pacific Forest Trust • Southern Oregon Land Conservancy • The Conservation Fund • The Nature Conservancy in Oregon  
The Trust for Public Land • The Wetlands Conservancy • Willowa Land Trust • Western Rivers Conservancy • Wild Rivers Land Trust  
**8 ASSOCIATE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** Black Oregon Land Trust • Cerro Gordo Land Conservancy • Clackamas Soil & Water  
Conservation District • East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District • Helvetia Community Association  
Tualatin Soil & Water Conservation District • View the Future • Yamhill Soil & Water Conservation District

program during the legislative session including Neahkahnie Water District, the Rhododendron Water Association, and the cities of Newport, Reedsport, and Lincoln City.

COLT supports the proposed rules and thanks OWEB staff for their hard work to craft this grant program. The proposed rules provide an accessible and flexible framework that will ensure grant funds support the most vulnerable drinking water systems and water sources. The rules are carefully aligned with other grant and loan programs to ensure funded projects can leverage multiple funding sources in completing projects. The program's small and flexible match requirement is accessible for small and rural water suppliers while still ensuring the program encourages the use of other funding sources and meets statutory requirements. Lastly, the use of a notice of grant to secure fee acquisitions provides flexibility to complete timely land acquisition projects while ensuring the perpetuity of conservation and management of the drinking water source lands.

In our coalition work within the legislature to educate on the need for this program, we identified seven water utilities and municipalities that are eager to utilize this new funding to protect their drinking water sources. We look forward to working closely with these and other community partners and our members to utilize the new Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program and to make the case in the legislature for additional funds for the program.

Thank you again for your hard work standing up this program, and for the opportunity to comment today.

Sincerely,

Karsyn Kendrick  
Conservation Program Manager  
Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

