



## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) was established in 2017 to help farms and ranches face the challenges caused by land fragmentation, conversion to non-farm uses, complex regulations, and planning for generational transfers.

Administered by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), the OAHP establishes grant programs for farmers and ranchers to support practices that maintain or enhance both agriculture and natural resources such as fish and wildlife on agricultural lands. The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission (OAHC) oversees the program and makes funding recommendations to OWEB's Board.

The OAHC consists of 12 members appointed by the OWEB Board. By statute, two of the voting members must be recommended by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and have expertise in fish and wildlife habitat. The term of office for each voting member of the OAHC is four years. Once recommended by the Commission, the voting members of the OAHC are appointed by the OWEB Board. Currently there is one fish and wildlife seat open on the OAHC.

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

OWEB recruited applications for the fish and wildlife member to serve on the OAHC on May 24, 2022 through an announcement on their OAHP web page and through their GovDelivery email lists. Members of the public were invited to submit interest forms directly to OWEB. OWEB received four applications by the June 30, 2022 deadline, and shared those with ODFW on July 1, 2022.

### ISSUE

The Commission needs to recommend a person to serve as a fish and wildlife habitat member on the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission. The recommendation is provided to OWEB for their consideration and appointment.

### ANALYSIS

ODFW staff reviewed the four applications for the fish and wildlife member seat on the OAHC. Each applicant was reviewed for their fish/wildlife/habitat expertise and background, education, and demonstrated commitment to conserving both wildlife habitat and working lands. A summary of each applicant is provided below, and their redacted application materials are provided as an attachment..

### **Eduardo Contreras**

Occupation: Habitat Program Coordinator

Location: Klamath Falls

Mr. Contreras brings to the OAHC a history of building strong partnerships to conserve working lands and wildlife habitat. Mr. Contreras is the Habitat Program Coordinator with the Intermountain West Joint Venture and lives in Klamath Falls. In this role, Mr. Contreras has worked with farmers and ranchers for the last decade to implement habitat projects on rangelands and wetlands in Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and California. His education and experience is in the field of rangeland management and research. He has technical expertise in Farm Bill Conservation programs including those programs that can be leveraged with OAHP funds. Mr. Contreras has worked on livestock ranch operations, sage-grouse initiatives, and collaborative partnerships to conserve wetlands for migratory birds on public and private working lands. Mr. Contreras serves on two non-profit boards.

### **Kenneth Bierly**

Occupation: Bierly & Associates LLC consultant, retired Deputy Director OWEB

Location: Salem/Jefferson County

Mr. Bierly played key roles in the establishment of Oregon's removal-fill program and Freshwater Wetlands Law, development of the Oregon Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, and was pivotal in developing and implementing the legislation that established the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. Mr. Bierly served as Deputy Director of OWEB from 1999-2003, and has a rich and lauded career history in Oregon's land use and conservation systems. Mr. Bierly has served on many public and non-profit boards.

### **Amanda Lowe**

Occupation: Soil Conservationist, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

Location: Pendleton

Ms. Lowe has a background in communications and education specific to agricultural communities and commodities. In her position with CTUIR she operates under the First Foods Mission, applying this mission to the farm and grazing conservation plans she develops with

wheat producers and cattle ranchers. She values conservation, sustainable land management, and serves on the Umatilla County Weed Board and the Umatilla County 4-H Association Board.

**Greg Green**

Occupation: Director of Conservation Programs – Pacific Northwest, Ducks Unlimited

Location: Vancouver, WA

Through his work with Ducks Unlimited, Mr. Green delivers conservation actions on private working lands, including conservation easements, habitat restoration, and farm/infrastructure improvements. He has more than 20 years of experience as a restoration practitioner and project manager, working in numerous states including Oregon and building public-private partnerships using a variety of fund types. He has a relationship with Oregon land trusts and has served on numerous non-profit boards and committees.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

While the other applicants had strong backgrounds, experience, and appreciation for conserving wildlife habitats and working lands, the Director recommends advancing Eduardo Contreras to the OWEB as the Commission’s recommended fish and wildlife habitat member of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission, to serve a four-year term beginning January 2023. Mr. Contreras’s strong technical background in NRCS programs can be leveraged by the OAHP. The value he places on collaborative partnerships to conserve working lands and wildlife habitats and his career experiences make him an excellent candidate for the OAHC.

**DRAFT MOTION:**

I move we approve the recommendation of Eduardo Contreras to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board for his appointment to the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission as a fish and wildlife habitat member, for a four-year term beginning January 2023.

**Effective Date:** September 16, 2022