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# Wyden, Merkley Urge Feds to Reconsider Deregulating Genetically Engineered Plant

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**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley today wrote federal officials to express concerns about the deregulation of a genetically engineered plant that threatens Oregon’s agriculture, recreation and grass seed industry.

The senators’ letter to Acting Agriculture Department Secretary Michael Scuse follows the announcement this week from the department’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service that it would deregulate Scotts Company’s and Monsanto Company’s ASR368 Creeping Bentgrass.

**“It is surprising and concerning that the government would recommend deregulation of an invasive, genetically engineered plant when eradication measures have failed and there are significant economic and ecological concerns,”** Wyden and Merkley wrote, citing concerns raised both by the Oregon Department of Agriculture and scientists at Oregon State University.

Contaminated grasses have been collected near the Crooked River National Grassland in Jefferson County. And more than 80,000 acres of farmland in Malheur County continues to be inspected for ASR368. Deregulation would shift the responsibility for mitigation on the local weed control board or even individual farmers in a county working to improve its economy.

Also at risk if Oregon’s grass seed crops are genetically contaminated by ASR368 is the state’s grass seed industry centered in Linn County. According to the Oregon Seed Council, grass seed production brings in \$300 million and drives more than \$1 billion in economic activity in Oregon.