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Statement to: Oregon Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
From: Sara Vickerman, Senior Director, Biodiversity Partnerships
Date: February 2, 2012

Re: Please Support SB 1511

MEASURE: SB 1511
EXHIBIT: 28
2012 SESSION S ENV. & NAT. RESOURCES
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SUBMITTED BY: Sara Vickerman

SB 1511 represents several years of study and negotiations among a wide variety of business, academic, government, landowners and non-profit organizations interested in finding more efficient approaches to address natural resource issues. This bill contains many of the recommendations of the working groups directed by the legislature to address specific issues identified in SB 513, passed by the legislature in 2009. It is focused on several issues:

1. Ecosystem services are important to communities, as they provide clean water, clean air, healthy and productive soil, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, flood and climate control and other values. Many of these values are considered public goods, which do not generate revenue for those who provide them.
2. Financial incentives are needed by some landowners to allow them to manage farms or forests so that they provide ecological benefits. Payments for ecosystem services or ecosystem service markets can provide some revenue to supplement traditional sources.
3. In order to determine a "price" for these services, it is important to be able to measure the ecological outcomes. SB 1511 encourages the Institute for Natural Resources to continue providing information to support the development of more practical and credible measures that can be used across agencies and services.
4. In order to direct economic and conservation investments to the highest priority places, it is important for developers and resource managers to reach agreement on the priorities. SB 1511 directs the Governor's office and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board staff to examine various resource agency plans to find the commonalities and conflicts, and to synthesize this information.
5. Different agencies have different rules for mitigating adverse impacts to the environment. These rules have developed over time without full consideration of the overall cost of implementation or the broad ecological impact. Unfortunately, the result has often been expensive with marginal ecological benefits. SB 1511 encourages agencies to explore more effective, lower cost options.
6. The bill is entirely permissive, providing overall policy guidance without imposing new regulations or relieving anyone of complying with existing regulations. It encourages, but does not require government agencies to try new approaches. Agencies can come back to the legislature with requests for specific policy changes later if they are necessary.

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