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**House Energy and Environment Committee  
February 28, 2013**

**House Bill 2106 (energy siting)**

*Statement of Bruce Taylor / Director, Oregon Biodiversity Program, Defenders of Wildlife*

Defenders of Wildlife participated on the task force Governor Kitzhaber convened in late 2011 to develop recommendations for his 10-Year Energy Action Plan, and we very much support the proposals outlined in the final version of his plan.

Because the details of this particular bill are still being worked out, I wanted to take a few moments to focus more generally on the concepts behind the the governor's proposal to develop a landscape-level plan to guide energy facility siting and mitigation.

As it stands right now, both developers and permitting authorities are confronted with a landscape full of narrow and specific do's and don'ts, and not much clarity in terms of the state's broader priorities for where development should occur and where it shouldn't. That's because the state of Oregon has a lot of different policy priorities, some of them conflicting.

Developing a plan to sort out those conflicting priorities and establish what the governor's proposal calls "a shared vision" for how new energy facilities fit into the landscape of eastern Oregon is a tall order, and probably beyond the scope of what this legislature is going to address through this bill.

But we hope the state will move forward with this effort over the next few years, because when development pressure begins to pick up again, and proposals for major new transmission lines begin to emerge, it will be really important to have some context for siting decisions that could have a profound impact on the future of that part of the state.

In the meantime, in the absence of that over-arching vision, there is a second and complimentary element of the governor's energy plan proposal that you may want to begin

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considering: to start moving towards a landscape approach to mitigation of the impacts of energy development.

Right now, most mitigation occurs piecemeal on an ad hoc basis, through a process that developers find cumbersome and expensive. The results too often look like a random set of conservation actions that add up to less than the sum of their parts.

A more strategic approach to mitigation, targeting investments to larger efforts that address regional conservation priorities on a landscape scale, could provide more efficient and effective options to offset the impacts of development. Market-based mechanisms, including mitigation banks and crediting systems like those used in wetlands mitigation, would provide greater predictability, transparency, and certainty for all parties.

The concepts underlying this landscape approach to mitigation have already been fairly well developed, and are already being applied in some other settings. Portland General Electric has been exploring options for such an approach with the eastern portion of its Cascade Crossing transmission line, and the early outlook is promising.

We look forward to working with the governor's office and other stakeholders to try to develop consensus on the best way forward with HB 2106 and hope you will join us in supporting these elements of the governor's 10-Year Energy Action Plan.

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