



The Nature Conservancy in Oregon
821 SE 14th Avenue
Portland, OR 97214-2537

tel 503 802-8100

fax 503 802-8199

nature.org/oregon

February 7, 2018

Testimony on HB 4109: Carbon Sequestration Opportunities

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Submitted by: Cathy Macdonald, External Affairs Director, The Nature Conservancy

Dear Chair Clem, Vice-Chairs McClain and Sprenger, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 4109. We appreciate the bill sponsors' and committee's efforts to improve forest health, reduce the risk of severe wildfires and increase carbon sequestration through natural and working lands investments.

The Nature Conservancy is a global, science-based, non-partisan conservation organization. Our mission is to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends.

The Conservancy was incorporated in Oregon in 1961. Today we have over 50,000 supporters statewide with members in every county in Oregon. Our staff, based in communities across Oregon, work collaboratively with tribes; local, state and federal agencies and elected officials; private landowners; businesses; and natural resource stakeholders to develop innovative solutions to major challenges facing people and nature.

Mitigating climate change and restoring the resilience of our forests are two of The Nature Conservancy's top priorities in Oregon. As part of our work on forest health, fire management, and climate change, I wanted to share a couple of considerations related to this bill.

First, The Nature Conservancy supports the use of carbon sequestration as part of a multi-pronged strategy to mitigate climate change. Last year, Conservancy scientists in collaboration with others, published two papers in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Scientists evaluating the role natural and working lands could play in meeting global GHG emission reduction goals. The global study found that natural pathways involving conservation, restoration, and changes in land management could provide up to 37% of the global GHG emission reduction needed by 2030 ([Griscom, et al. 2017](#)).

Colleagues in California found that an ambitious implementation scenario could contribute as much as 147 MMTCO₂e or 17.4 percent of the cumulative reductions needed to meet California's 2030 goal ([Cameron et al. 2017](#)). Most reductions came from changes in forest management, followed by reforestation, avoided conversion, compost amendments to

grasslands and wetland and grassland restoration. Conservancy scientists are working to develop a similar analysis for Oregon. In addition, we are developing an evaluation of forest carbon risks and opportunities incorporating productivity, fire risk and risk of present-day forests transitioning to non-forest following fire.

Second, we also support the development of effective state incentive programs as a compliment to other emission reduction strategies to help companies reduce GHG emission and increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands.

However, work needs to be done first to establish forest carbon baselines and identify the practices that will have the biggest return on investment of state resources. While some progress was made by the Oregon Global Warming Commission's forest carbon task force, lack of resources made it difficult for the group to finalize a methodology for forest carbon accounting.

Considering this, we recommend that the state start by investing in a well-designed, adequately funded study, conducted by the Oregon Dept. of Forestry and the Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality, to finish work to design methods to measure carbon sequestration reliably and establish baselines. We would encourage you to consider extending the study to: (a) assess all natural and working lands and (b) evaluate the best strategies or pathways for increasing sequestration. In doing this work, we recommend the state agencies work with researchers from academic institutions, such as Oregon State University, and convene other important stakeholders to ensure the study is well informed and yields results all interested parties can agree on. **When this work is complete we would support follow-on work to develop new incentive programs.**

In closing, we'd like to again thank you for tackling these complex issues and for the opportunity to provide comments today.