



# Oregon Global Warming Commission



Natural & Working Lands Proposal  
2021





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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	4
KEY PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A PROPOSED CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND STORAGE GOAL FOR OREGON'S NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS .....	6
OGWC-PROPOSED CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND STORAGE GOALS FOR OREGON'S NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS .....	7
PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING SEQUESTRATION IN OREGON'S NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS .....	10
1. Position the state to leverage federal lands and investments in climate-smart natural and working lands practices.....	12
2. Investigate and advance options for sustained state funding to increase sequestration in natural and working lands.....	13
3. Fund and direct state agencies to take actions to advance key natural and working lands strategies. ....	14
4. Invest in improvements to Oregon’s natural and working lands inventory data and research into climate-smart management practices.....	21
CONCLUSIONS.....	23
WORKS CITED .....	24
APPENDIX A: OUTREACH METHODS AND RESULTS .....	27
APPENDIX B: CONSERVATION PRACTICES IDENTIFIED THROUGH SURVEYS AND FOCUSED DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AGENCY EXPERTS AS CONTRIBUTING TO CARBON SEQUESTRATION.....	30

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's [Global Warming of 1.5°C Special Report](#) emphasized the urgency of climate action and the important role the land sector can and must play as part of a comprehensive climate change mitigation strategy. In Executive Order 20-04, Governor Brown directed the Oregon Global Warming Commission to work in coordination with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Forestry, and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to develop and submit a proposal for setting a carbon sequestration and storage goal for Oregon's natural and working lands.

*Oregon's natural and working lands — including forests, grasslands, rangelands, farmlands, tidal and subtidal wetlands, and the parks and open spaces in urban environments — provide a range of environmental, social, health, and economic benefits statewide including opportunities to increase carbon sequestration to reduce Oregon's overall greenhouse gas emissions.*

The Environmental Protection Agency (2020) reports that carbon sequestered in natural and working lands reduced total GHG emissions in the United States by 12 percent in 2019. Researchers estimate that the amount of carbon sequestered annually could be more than doubled by protecting and restoring natural habitats and modifying management practices on farms, forests, and rangelands ([Fargione et al 2018](#)).

Over the past year, the OGWC worked closely with the named partner agencies as well as the Departments of Environmental Quality and of Land Conservation and Development to engage Tribes, landowners and managers, federal and state agencies, conservation organizations, environmental justice leaders, technical assistance providers, and scientists to inform the level of ambition we should aspire to in recommending a goal for natural and working lands and the strategies the state should advance to reach that level of ambition. In total, we heard from more than 1,000 individuals and organizations. Input ranged from recommendations on the goal and specific strategies to general considerations for designing policy, practice, and investment frameworks.

Based on tribal and stakeholder input, research, and information provided by state and federal agencies, the OGWC recommends the state adopt the following outcome-based goals.

### Outcome-Based Goal

Sequester at least an **additional 5 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year in Oregon's natural and working lands and waters by 2030**, and at least **9.5 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year by 2050** relative to a 2010 to 2019 activity-based, business-as-usual net carbon sequestration baseline.<sup>1</sup> The OGWC recommends that the natural and working lands outcome-based goal should be separate from, and in addition to, Oregon's sector-based emissions reduction goals as established by the Legislature and updated in Governor Brown's EO 20-04.

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<sup>1</sup> For context, net carbon sequestered in the measured forest and the wood products pools, which dominate Oregon's total annual net carbon sequestration and storage balance, was 21.7 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e/year between 2001 and 2016. Forest ecosystem carbon pools sequestered 30.5 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e/year while net emissions from the wood products pool (including sequestration of 8.4 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e in the Products in Use pool and emissions of 17.2 MMT CO<sub>2</sub>e from the Solid Waste Disposal Sites) was 8.8 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e/year.

If we are able to get back on track to meeting our 2035 and 2050 sector-based emission reduction goals and we achieve the sequestration goals proposed here, Oregon could be net neutral and fully contributing to climate repair before 2040, positioning the state as the U.S. leader on climate mitigation.

In addition, we recommend the state establish:

### **Activity-Based Metrics**

To achieve the outcome-based goal and support adoption of climate-smart management practices, significant investments will be needed in technical assistance, incentives, data and research, and policy development—including rules and regulations, when applicable and authority exists. Activity-based metrics (e.g., number of acres with adoption of soil health practices, acres of maintained resource lands, acres of riparian reforestation, and acres of urban forest canopy expansion) will help the state evaluate progress. Activity-based goals for programs designed to incentivize climate-smart management practices will help communities, technical assistance providers, and land managers anticipate the opportunity to adopt new practices.

### **Community Impact Metrics**

Community impact metrics should be developed to inform and evaluate the co-benefits and impacts of natural and working lands strategies. Environmental justice considerations should be prioritized throughout carbon sequestration programs, in line with recommendations from Oregon's [Environmental Justice Task Force](#), the [Racial Justice Council](#) and Oregon's Interagency Workgroup on Climate Impacts to Impacted Communities. The community impact metrics and goals should be designed to evaluate the benefits and burdens associated with different strategies, practices, and programs. These metrics should include effects on jobs, local economies, public health, and access to programs, among other factors.

The OGWC identified four broad strategies with ten supporting elements to achieve the ambitious outcome-based goals:

1. Position the state to leverage federal lands and investments in climate-smart natural and working lands practices.
2. Investigate options and create a sustained source of state funding to increase sequestration in natural and working lands.
3. Fund and direct the agencies to take actions to advance natural and working lands strategies.
4. Invest in improvements to Oregon's natural and working lands inventory.

Collectively the strategies we outlined, if sufficiently and effectively resourced, would go a long way toward reaching the natural and working lands ambition we recommend.

If carefully designed, strategies for increasing sequestration in Oregon's natural and working lands and waters will also provide multiple co-benefits from increased resilience, to improved air quality, better fish and wildlife habitat, jobs and economic development, and lower health and energy costs. While significant funding will be needed to achieve the goals, the financial savings from avoiding the worst impacts of climate change and the value of the goods and services associated with improved natural and working lands will far exceed those costs.

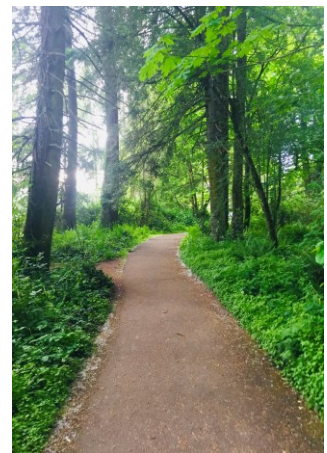
## INTRODUCTION

In Executive Order 20-04, Governor Brown directed the Oregon Global Warming Commission to work in coordination with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Forestry, and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to develop and submit a proposal for setting a carbon sequestration and storage goal for Oregon’s natural and working lands.

With emissions of carbon dioxide—a potent greenhouse gas—continuing to be released at unsustainable levels, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s [Global Warming of 1.5°C Special Report](#) emphasized the urgency of climate action and the important role the land sector can and must play as part of a comprehensive climate change mitigation strategy. In its report, the IPCC described that to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we need to achieve net zero global greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050.<sup>2</sup> IPCC’s [sixth assessment report](#) on climate science reinforced this conclusion. However, with each passing day, it is increasingly apparent that we need as much climate repair as possible, as soon as possible, through aggressive fossil fuel emissions reductions and natural and working lands sequestration and storage strategies.

In 2019, carbon sequestered in natural and working lands reduced total GHG emissions in the United States by 12 percent—as captured by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in the U.S. Greenhouse Gas Inventory under the “Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry” sector ([EPA 2020](#)). Researchers estimate that the amount of carbon sequestered annually could be more than doubled by protecting and restoring natural habitats and modifying management practices on farms, forests, and rangelands ([Fargione et al 2018](#)).

Significant actions are being taken at the federal level and by other states to increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands. President Biden included enhancing carbon sinks in our forests, agriculture, and oceans through climate-smart investments as part of his ambitious [commitment](#) to an economy-wide target of reducing U.S. GHG emissions by at least 50 percent below 2005 levels by 2030 and to reach net-zero GHG emissions by 2050. Along with aggressive plans for reducing GHG emissions from other sectors, at least eight states have developed climate action plans that include specific strategies and programs to increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands.<sup>3</sup>



*Oregon's natural and working lands — including forests, grasslands, rangelands, farmlands, tidal and subtidal wetlands, and the parks and open spaces in urban environments — provide a range of environmental, social, health, and economic benefits statewide including opportunities to increase carbon sequestration to reduce Oregon's overall greenhouse gas emissions.*

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<sup>2</sup> Achieving net-zero requires that annual GHG emissions are as close to zero as possible, and that any remaining emissions are canceled out by removing GHGs from the atmosphere, through sequestration or carbon removal technologies.

<sup>3</sup> Including California, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Wisconsin.

Select state actions include:

- *California*. Facing reports that natural and working lands have become a net source of emissions, the state of California developed a [plan](#) for reducing land sector emissions by a cumulative 83 to 84 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e) between 2020 and 2045 (or approximately 3.3 to 3.4 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year) through a suite of state-supported land management, restoration, and conservation activities.
- *Maine*. The state’s Climate Council [plans](#) to protect its natural resource industries, increase land conservation, and provide more technical assistance to landowners as ways of achieving carbon neutrality goal by 2045. For coastal resources, Maine has prioritized protecting tidal marshes and eelgrass habitat, as well as determining the role seaweed aquaculture could play in carbon sequestration.
- *Maryland*. Maryland [plans](#) to reforest 68,530 acres and plant 2.65 million urban trees to increase sequestration by 1.3 to 1.8 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030.
- *Massachusetts*. The state [estimates](#) that it can increase natural carbon stocks by an additional 1 to 2 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year through afforestation, reforestation, forest management, and natural ecosystem restoration.

## Climate-Smart Natural Resource Management

The term “Climate-Smart” was first applied to natural resource management by [Stein et al. 2014](#). They included the following principles of climate-smart management:

- embrace forward-looking goals
- link actions to climate impacts
- consider broader landscape context
- adopt strategies robust to uncertainty
- employ agile and informed management
- minimize carbon footprint
- account for climate influence on project success
- safeguard people and nature
- avoid mal-adaptation

In response to President Biden’s Climate Executive Order, the [U.S. Department of Agriculture defined](#) climate-smart agriculture and forestry strategies as proven conservation practices to: “achieve enhanced productivity and economic sustainability for U.S. agriculture and forestry; improved ecological, social, and economic resilience to climate change; increased carbon sequestration; and reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Climate-smart practices include activities that store carbon and improve resilience and soil health, such as reduced and no-till, cover crops, and prescribed grazing; reduce GHG emissions, including methane and nitrous oxide, using practices such as ruminant feed management, manure management, and fertilizer management; improve on-farm energy efficiency, such as improved irrigation efficiency, reduced fuel use, and energy conservation; and improve forest management to increase forest resilience and health.”



With Oregon’s carbon-dense westside forests, diverse and productive agricultural and range lands, and high-carbon tidal wetlands, we have the potential, if not the imperative, to enhance our natural and working lands’ significant contribution to climate change mitigation. In addition to providing climate mitigation benefits, research has demonstrated that investments in practices to increase sequestration in natural and working lands provide multiple co-benefits:

**We have the potential, if not the imperative, to enhance our natural and working lands’ significant contribution to climate change mitigation.**

- Planting trees in urban areas reduces heat island effects and improves air quality.
- Restoring coastal wetlands improves fish habitat and protects coastal communities from increasing impacts from storm surges.
- Implementing regenerative farming practices increases soil productivity and moisture-holding capacity.
- Advancing climate-smart forest management practices increases long-term fiber supplies.
- Investing across these practices creates jobs, generates increased revenue for private land managers, reduces energy and health care costs, and improves people’s quality of life.

The following proposal includes a net carbon sequestration and storage goal for Oregon’s natural and working lands, describes some of the policies, practices, and programs (collectively referred to as “strategies”) that should be deployed to achieve the goal, and identifies next steps for increasing investments in climate-smart natural and working lands strategies.

## **KEY PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A PROPOSED CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND STORAGE GOAL FOR OREGON’S NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS**

In July 2020, the Oregon Global Warming Commission adopted principles for developing a net carbon sequestration and storage goal for Oregon’s natural and working lands:<sup>4</sup>

- The process will be inclusive and transparent and provide opportunities for broad public engagement and coordination with other Boards and Commissions.
- The inventory, baseline, and projection methods will be based on guidance from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and best available science.
- The proposed goals and recommended strategies will:
  - Prioritize consideration of benefits to Climate Impacted Communities—including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, Tribes, low-income communities, rural communities, and other historically disadvantaged communities at greater risk to climate impacts;
  - Incorporate landowner, land manager, and community interests in the design of strategies;
  - Include provisions to ensure a diversity of landowners and managers can participate in any potential market- and incentive-based programs and provide meaningful climate benefits; and

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<sup>4</sup> As modified by the Commission in August 2021.



- Consider co-benefits—additional societal benefits—resulting from actions relevant for achieving other state goals (e.g., racial justice, climate resilience, jobs, and clean water).

Over the past year, the OGWC has worked closely with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Forestry, and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board as directed in EO 20-04, as well as with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Land Conservation and Development. We engaged Tribes, landowners and managers, federal and state agencies, conservation organizations, environmental justice leaders, technical assistance providers, and scientists to inform the level of ambition we should aspire to and the strategies the state should advance to reach that level of ambition. In total, we engaged more than 1,000 individuals through opportunities for public comment, surveys, and focus-group discussions. Input ranged from recommendations on the goal and specific strategies to general considerations for designing policy, practice, and investment frameworks. A brief summary of the input is provided below. Specific outreach methods and analyses are described in Appendix A.



## OGWC-PROPOSED CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND STORAGE GOALS FOR OREGON'S NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS

Tribal and stakeholder input regarding a proposed net carbon sequestration goal for Oregon encouraged the OGWC to recommend the following:

- **Address the Urgency of Climate Action.** The goal should be bold and ambitious. Oregon should strive to be a national and global leader in carbon sequestration and land-sector GHG emissions reductions.
- **Add to Existing Goals.** The goal should be additive to the existing emissions reduction goals set by the legislature and as updated by Governor Brown's Executive Order 20-04.
- **Be Informed by Science.** The goals should be informed by science, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge.
- **Advance Equity.** Establish goals to ensure natural and working land strategies advance equity and place the most vulnerable communities at the forefront of the benefits of strategies to increase carbon sequestration.
- **Create Accountability.** The proposal should call for quantified net sequestration and activity-based goals and metrics to ensure we can hold ourselves accountable.
- **Ensure Continuous Improvement.** The goal should be based on the best available science and a process should be established to ensure that it is improved over time as new information is available.

In setting a goal for net sequestration in natural and working lands, we considered management practices that mitigate climate change by sequestering more carbon, and management practices that help Oregon's natural and working lands adapt to the climate impacts we cannot avoid. Broadly speaking, we need to manage Oregon's natural and working lands to be the most resilient and robust climate sink we can achieve in keeping with the scale and urgency of the climate crisis, while maintaining the health of our economy and communities, and enhancing equity and quality of life for all Oregonians.

Several studies have estimated the net sequestration benefits that have, or would result from changes in policies and land management practices in Oregon’s forests (e.g. [Cathcart et al. 2007](#), [Latta et al. 2016](#), [Diaz et al. 2018](#), [Law et al. 2018](#)); tidal ecosystems ([Kauffman et al. 2019](#), [Beers et al. 2021](#)); and farm and rangeland soils ([Moore et al. 2021](#)). In addition to the benefits of land management practices, studies have also assessed the climate mitigation benefits of the forest product pool when they are derived from sustainable harvests ([Ganguly et. al. 2020](#)).

In the most comprehensive natural and working lands assessment for Oregon, [Graves et al. \(2020\)](#) evaluated the potential of twelve land-use and management practices that could be taken to increase carbon sequestration on Oregon’s natural and working lands. Based on assumptions regarding the rates of adoption of management practices, the study projects that we could increase net sequestration in Oregon by up to 9.5 MMT CO<sub>2</sub>e per year by 2050.

Based on tribal and stakeholder input, research (Graves et al. 2020, Moore et al. 2021, Beers et al. 2021 among others), and information provided by state and federal agencies, the OGWC recommends the state adopt the following initial outcome-based goal for increasing carbon sequestration from Oregon’s natural and working lands:

### Outcome-Based Goal

Sequester at least an **additional 5MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year in Oregon’s natural and working lands and waters by 2030**, and at least **9.5MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year by 2050** relative to a 2010 to 2019 activity-based, business-as-usual net carbon sequestration baseline.<sup>5</sup> The OGWC recommends that the natural and working lands outcome-based goal should be separate from, and in addition to, Oregon’s sector-based emissions reduction goals as established by the Legislature and updated in Governor Brown’s EO 20-04.

**Oregon could be net neutral and fully contributing to climate repair before 2040, positioning the state as the U.S. leader on climate mitigation.**

If Oregon is able to get back on track to meeting our 2035 and 2050 sector-based emission reduction goals and achieve the proposed sequestration goals, Oregon could be net neutral and fully contributing to climate repair before 2040, positioning the state as the U.S. leader on climate mitigation.<sup>6 7</sup>

The outcome-based goal should be assessed and updated as new research is available regarding the opportunities and constraints on the potential to increase net sequestration in natural and working lands. The OGWC

<sup>5</sup> For context, net carbon sequestered in the measured forest and the wood products pools, which dominate Oregon’s total annual net carbon sequestration and storage balance, was 21.7 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e/year between 2001 and 2016. Forest ecosystem carbon pools sequestered 30.5 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e/year while net emissions from the wood products pool (including sequestration of 8.4 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e in the Products in Use pool and emissions of 17.2 MMT CO<sub>2</sub>e from the Solid Waste Disposal Sites) was 8.8 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e/year.

<sup>6</sup> Oregon’s current sector-based goals are to reduce GHG emissions compared to the 1990 GHG emissions baseline (58 million metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>e (MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e)) by at least 45 percent by 2035 and by at least 80 percent by 2050. This equates to a reduction to 32 million metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>e (MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e) in 2035 and a reduction to 12 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2050.

<sup>7</sup> California and Virginia have 2045 net neutrality goals.

recommends the state re-evaluate and update the goal at least every four years.

It is important to note that research-to-date has not evaluated the following factors that may affect the added mitigation potential our natural and working lands can offer:

- The impacts of climate change on net sequestration – especially the impacts of the increasing scale and severity of wildfires or the near-term carbon consequences of management practices designed to reduce fuel loads on net sequestration.<sup>8</sup>
- Economic consequences of implementing changes in land use and management practices.<sup>9</sup>
- The contribution of other pathways such as agroforestry, restoration of eelgrass beds and kelp forests, use of biochar, or expansion of long-lived harvested wood products.

In addition, the OGWC recommends the state develop:

### Activity-Based Metrics and Goals

To achieve the outcome-based goal and support adoption of climate-smart management practices, significant investments will be needed in technical assistance, incentives, data and research, and policy development, including rules and regulations, when applicable and authority exists. Activity-based metrics (e.g., number of acres with adoption of soil health practices, acres of maintained resource lands, acres of riparian reforestation, and acres of urban forest canopy expansion) will help the state evaluate progress. Activity-based goals for programs designed to incentivize climate-smart management practices will help communities, technical assistance providers, and land managers anticipate the opportunity to adopt new practices.

### Community Impact Metrics

Community impact metrics should be developed to inform and evaluate the co-benefits and impacts of natural and working lands strategies. Environmental justice considerations should be prioritized throughout carbon sequestration programs, in line with recommendations from Oregon's [Environmental Justice Task Force](#), the [Racial Justice Council](#) and Oregon's Interagency Workgroup on Climate Impacts to Impacted Communities. The community impact metrics and goals should be designed to evaluate the benefits and burdens associated with different strategies, practices, and programs. These metrics should include effects on jobs, local economies, public health, and access to programs, among other factors.

If capacity is available, Governor Brown should direct the agencies (ODA, ODF, OWEB, DLCD, and DEQ) and the Environmental Justice Task Force to begin work as soon as possible with the OGWC to draft Activity and Community metrics, establish the 2010 to 2019 business-as-usual baseline, and complete a first draft of a Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry inventory. The agencies should use the best

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<sup>8</sup> Fuel reduction treatments (thinning and application of prescribed fire) designed to increase the resilience of Oregon's fire prone forests initially create a "carbon debt" on the landscape that may be paid back over time through reduced wildfire emissions.

<sup>9</sup> While many land use and management practices designed to increase net sequestration have been shown to improve productivity and revenue to land managers over time, many come with transition costs and some with consequences that will need to be carefully evaluated.



available data and science to draft the metrics, baseline and inventory. The Legislature should fund agency capacity to support a Natural and Working Lands Council to review and secure public comment on the agencies' draft metrics, baseline, and inventory. The Council should be tasked with reporting their findings relative to the agencies' recommendations to the OGWC within six months of the Council's establishment and then sunset.

The OGWC should deliberate on and adopt Activity and Community metrics recommended by the Council. Once the metrics are established, the agencies should be directed to provide the OGWC with regular updates on progress toward the metrics as well as implementation of the OGWC's natural and working lands recommendations. The OGWC will begin reporting on progress relative to the metrics; any needed updates to the goals, baseline, and inventory; and recommendations for improving strategies for accelerating adoption of climate-smart management as part of the Commission's Biennial Reports to the Legislature.

## **PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING SEQUESTRATION IN OREGON'S NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS**

Natural and working lands can and must be an important part of a comprehensive climate mitigation strategy for Oregon. To achieve the ambitious outcome-based goals and further develop the Activity-based and Community Impact metrics and goals, the OGWC recommends that the Governor and Legislature take actions to:

- 1. Position the state to leverage federal lands and investments in climate-smart natural and working lands practices.**
- 2. Investigate options and create a sustained source of state funding to increase sequestration in natural and working lands.**
- 3. Fund and direct the agencies to take actions to advance natural and working lands strategies.**
- 4. Invest in improvements to Oregon's natural and working lands inventory.**

These actions, as described in more detail below should be guided by the input received during the public engagement process used to develop this proposal which is summarized below and described further in Appendix A.

### **Tribal and Stakeholder Input on Practices, Incentives, and Strategic Regulatory Changes**

**Conservation Practices.** Tribes and stakeholders provided input on a wide range of land management practices that could increase sequestration in natural and working lands—from restoring forested tidal wetlands, to lengthening forest harvest rotations, and deploying regenerative agricultural practices (see Appendix B for a list of practices). Land managers identified practices that they are currently using as well as practices they are interested in deploying in the future. They identified key barriers of new practice adoption including concern about the cost of implementation, challenges with accessing programs, as well as the need for the technical support and mentorship. Specific concerns were raised about inequities Black and Indigenous people of color land managers have in accessing financial resources and the added barriers that creates to their adoption of new practices. Commenters recommended that the

state invest in a suite of practices that make sense for the unique conditions and land uses in different region of the state.

**Incentive-Based Strategies.** By far the most common input was to advance programs that incentivize voluntary conservation measures that land managers can use to adopt practices that increase carbon sequestration. To increase buy-in, commenters recommended that strategies be developed through processes that are both equitable and collaborative, with the inclusion of Tribes, other historically underrepresented groups, land managers, technical assistance providers and conservation organizations. The process used to redesign existing programs and develop new programs needs to recognize and address the inequities and barriers facing Climate Impacted Communities such as inequities in access to information and technical assistance, and barriers to participation in stakeholder meetings (e.g., lack of access to childcare, quality internet, and transportation options) as well as language barriers.

To address key barriers to adoption of new practices, Tribes and stakeholders identified the need for increased investments in education, technical assistance, and recognition; financial support for land management transitions and new practice adoption including tax incentives; funding for land protection and easement programs as well as habitat restoration. The need for funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program was specifically identified as an important part of advancing climate-smart management practices.

Stakeholders encouraged the state to adopt strategies that are informed by science including Traditional Ecological Knowledge and when possible, to design programs that employ an integrated systems-based approach by including diverse natural and working lands strategies as well as practices to reduce other sector-based emissions (e.g., energy efficiency, water conservation, on-farm renewable energy development).

Commenters recommended that policies and programs should be streamlined, designed for practical implementation and informed through a continuous improvement process to avoid negative consequences to producers, communities, and the economy. Stakeholders also encouraged the OGWC to evaluate and eliminate disincentives in existing policies and programs that reduce the adoption of climate-smart practices.

In designing strategies, public input encouraged policy makers to align mechanisms with tribal governments and federal agencies. Tribal representatives underscored the opportunities for collaboration to address the climate crisis. Commenters also emphasized the importance of aligning mitigation strategies with other state needs and goals – related to equity, climate adaption, water supply and quality, community resilience, native fish and wildlife habitat protection and restoration, and a sustainable long-lived wood products supply.

**Strategic Improvements to Regulatory Programs.** Some stakeholders identified the need to include strategic improvements to regulatory mechanisms, while others expressed concern about more regulation including concerns that voluntary measures could become the basis for future regulations. For those supporting regulatory improvements to maintain or increase sequestration in natural and working lands, two were called out most often: Oregon’s Statewide Land Use Planning Goals and Oregon’s Forest Practices Act.

## 1. Position the state to leverage federal lands and investments in climate-smart natural and working lands practices.

With federal lands making up 53 percent of Oregon’s natural and working lands, it will also be critical to work with our federal land managing agencies to ensure their land-use and management plans and programs support achieving Oregon’s sequestration goal. The State of Oregon has a good track record of working collaboratively with federal land managing agencies on approaches for meeting state goals.

In addition, as referenced earlier, there is significant and growing support at the federal level for investments in climate-smart practices on both federal lands and through federal support for management of state and private lands. President Biden’s administration is advancing actions to increase support for climate-smart agricultural and forestry practices. President Biden’s [Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad](#) directed the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to collect input on how to best use the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s existing programs, funding, and financing capacities to encourage the voluntary adoption of climate-smart agricultural and forestry practices. President Biden also directed the Secretary of Commerce, through the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to collect input from fishermen, regional ocean councils, fishery management councils, scientists, and other stakeholders on how to make fisheries and protected resources more resilient to climate change, including changes in management and conservation measures, and improvements in science, monitoring, and cooperative research.

ODA, ODF, and OWEB submitted [extensive comments](#) to the USDA to inform implementation of this directive. In May, the USDA released a [Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry \(CSAF\) Strategy: 90-Day Progress Report](#) in response to their initial request for input. The overarching elements and underlying specifics in the progress report were consistent with the State’s recommendations. The Administration has already made investments in actions recommended by Oregon agencies, such as removing disincentives to planting cover crops and [expanding crop insurance](#) to apply to cover crops.

In addition, there is growing support in Congress for increasing investments in climate-smart land and water management. Among other outcomes, bills being considered in Congress would:

- Increase funding for reforestation;
- Provide incentives for agricultural producers to carry out climate stewardship practices;
- Provide information to landowners and managers regarding voluntary carbon markets;
- De-risk private investments in climate-smart management practices;
- Provide support to efforts to assess, protect, restore, and enhance important coastal areas that provide fish and wildlife habitat;
- Provide for ocean-based climate solutions to reduce carbon emissions and global warming;
- Establish a blue carbon program to conserve and restore marine and coastal blue carbon ecosystems; and
- Award competitive grants to tribal governments to further achievement of tribal coastal zone objectives.

In Oregon’s 2021 Legislative Session, General Fund dollars and funding from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act were allocated to advance important actions and projects related to natural resources. These incredible one-time investments should be considered a down payment toward a long-term investment strategy to increase sequestration in natural and working lands strategies. Moving forward, the agencies and the Legislature should continue to track federal program development and legislation to determine where state investments in capacity will be needed to leverage new federal programs and policies. By



analyzing federal opportunities and aligning Oregon’s programs and investments, we can most efficiently and effectively include natural and working lands in our overall climate mitigation strategy.

## **2. Investigate and advance options for sustained state funding to increase sequestration in natural and working lands.**

We can achieve some increases in sequestration by including a climate mitigation lens in existing natural and working lands programs. In addition to natural and working lands investments that can be made through grant programs administered by OWEB and NRCS, DEQ should be encouraged to work with Tribes and stakeholders to solicit and fund projects that result in net carbon sequestration on natural and working lands, including but not limited to use of Climate Community Investments.

However, to achieve the ambitious goals we recommend, new funding will be needed to:

- Fund and staff agencies to develop and implement recommendations and/or required policy changes.
- Strengthen education, engagement, and technical assistance efforts;
- Leverage private investment through state bonding authority or a state authorized green bank;
- Increase and deploy nature-based solutions in and around our built environment;
- Provide incentives to help land managers adopt climate-smart practices; and
- Protect and restore natural habitats that sequester carbon.

With dedicated funding for natural climate solutions, the state will be better positioned to leverage federal funding, private investments, and philanthropic funding. Having predictable funding sources empowers the state to establish long-term climate priorities to conserve, restore and manage natural and working lands to help communities mitigate and adapt to climate change. Efforts to advance natural and working lands strategies will be more efficient and effective with dedicated funding that land managers, technical assistance providers, and agencies can anticipate and plan on.

**Research on the cost of implementing Natural Climate Solutions in the U.S. estimates that 25 percent of the maximum potential of 1.2 Billion MT CO<sub>2</sub>e can be achieved at less than \$10 per ton, and an additional 51 percent can be achieved at between \$10 and \$50 per ton (Fargione et al 2018).**

A study should be conducted to evaluate the feasibility of potential funding mechanisms the state could establish to support natural and working lands sequestration strategies. Several states have conducted feasibility studies to evaluate new potential funding sources. For example, the Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy analyzed nine potential funding

## **Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Grant Program**

OWEB, the State of Oregon agency with a mission to provide grant funding to protect and restore healthy watersheds, established a board-level Climate Committee in April 2020 to help carry out the Board’s intent to account for climate adaptation, mitigation, and related co-benefits in its grant-making. In 2021, OWEB will begin gathering information about how applicants are considering climate impacts in their project identification and planning. OWEB’s Climate Committee will use this information to guide future work and assist applicants plan and evaluate their projects. To assist with the questions, OWEB also is providing a Technical Resources document to help applicants find data about climate impacts relevant to planning their project.

strategies for creating dedicated funding for natural and working land strategies for Wisconsin in 2020 ([Trust for Public Land 2020](#)). A similar study should be commissioned for Oregon.

### 3. Fund and direct state agencies to take actions to advance key natural and working lands strategies.

Advancing the natural and working lands proposal will require added and dedicated capacity within the natural resource agencies as well as the OGWC. With added capacity, the agencies should be:

- Given additional authority as needed to support achieving the state’s sequestration goals;
- Directed to incorporate consideration of natural and working land sequestration into their missions and performance metrics;
- Required to provide regular reports to the OGWC on metrics and progress toward meeting the natural and working lands goals; and
- Directed to take actions to advance the natural and working lands strategies described below.

#### *A) Enhance and maintain Oregon’s statewide land use planning program, goals and commit to a no-net annual loss of natural and working lands and waters.*

As described in DLCD’s April testimony to the OGWC, since 1973, Oregon’s statewide land-use planning program has sought to maintain resource lands in the face of increasing development by maintaining forest and agricultural land under protective zoning, and limiting growth to areas within urban growth boundaries. A conservative estimate concluded that Oregon’s land-use planning system has reduced emissions due to land use conversion by 1.7 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year in western Oregon alone ([Cathcart et al. 2007](#)). Continued protection of resource lands means natural and working lands remain undeveloped and available for implementation of practices that sequester carbon.

#### **Land Use Planning Decision Support Tools**

The State of California developed TerraCount, a scenario planning tool for use by cities, counties, districts, and other land-use planners that models the greenhouse gas (GHG) and natural resource implications of different development patterns and management activities. TerraCount allows planners to evaluate the application of management activities such as cover cropping, restoration activities (e.g., riparian restoration), and avoided conversion on net GHG emissions from natural and working lands. TerraCount is an open-source planning tool available on the California Department of Land Conservation’s [website](#).

The Legislature should fund and direct DLCD to conduct an analysis of Oregon’s Statewide Planning Goals, planning guidance and tools, and other assistance the agency provides to local governments to determine how the statewide planning goals and their implementation and support mechanisms should be enhanced to best facilitate the protection and restoration of natural and working lands to increase sequestration. Of particular importance to this work will be Statewide Planning Goals 3 (Agricultural Lands), 4 (Forest Lands), 5 (Natural Resources, Scenic and Historic Areas, and Open Spaces), 16 (Estuarine Resources), and 17 (Coastal Shorelands). The analysis should also include actions DLCD should take to direct and support local jurisdictions to address climate mitigation in their comprehensive plans and land use regulations.

In addition, DLCD is currently conducting rulemaking for its Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities Program. This program will assist municipalities “extend Oregon’s legacy of protecting natural and working lands by encouraging growth in urban areas where people

can walk, bike, or take transit to meet their daily needs.” The OGWC recommends that the Legislature fund and direct DLCD to support and advance assessment of the carbon sequestration benefits of land-use scenarios in landscape and community level planning processes.

*B) Invest in Oregon’s crop and rangelands through the establishment of a comprehensive climate-smart agricultural program and the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program.*

[Several states](#) have, or are in the process of developing, soil health and climate-smart agricultural programs. The OGWC recommends the Legislature fund the development of a soil health and climate-smart agricultural program. The program should align and integrate the efforts of ODA, OWEB, agricultural research programs at Oregon State University, and technical assistance provided through OSU Extension and Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The program should foster federal partnerships; in particular, it should leverage Natural Resource Conservation Service programs. Elements of the state’s climate-smart agricultural program could be advanced in part through the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP), which was established by the State Legislature in 2017 but has yet to be funded. The current OAHP rules and priorities should be evaluated to see if and how they would need to be updated to best advance climate-smart practices.

For Oregon’s diverse croplands, an integrated climate-smart agriculture program should evaluate and advance strategies to incentivize soil health practice adoption as well other climate-smart practices such as nutrient management, manure management, alley cropping, and expansion of riparian plantings. In Oregon’s rangelands, the program should advance the implementation of rangeland practices that reduce the invasion of non-native annual grasses and restore rangelands that have already been invaded.

The climate-smart agricultural program should:

- Promote climate-smart management practices to Oregon’s agricultural communities;
- Promote farmer-to-farmer learning about soil health;
- Integrate outreach and education efforts;
- Collaborate with local partners and landowners to conduct soil health demonstration projects;
- Highlight soil health improvement efforts by Oregon’s farmers and ranchers;
- Evaluate state incentives such as tax credits for implementing climate-smart agricultural practices;
- Provide input to conservation funding programs such as the next iteration of the Farm Bill;
- Serve as a liaison with researchers in the state regarding applied research needs associated with climate-smart practice priorities; and
- Build relationships with other states and organizations that already have climate-smart agricultural programs.





## Tribal Leadership to Grow Plants for Habitat Restoration

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's (CTUIR) Native Plant Nursery grows approximately 70 native plant species. The nursery grows native plants to revegetate natural wildlife habitats in eastern Oregon. The CTUIR have been working with state and federal partners since 2016 to grow plants to restore sagebrush and bitterbrush in eastern Oregon after fires. Both species provide critical cover for the greater sage-grouse, which is classified as a Species of Conservation concern by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and as a Sensitive Species by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

### *C) Support the implementation of climate-smart forest management.*

The greatest potential for increasing carbon sequestration in Oregon is associated with the management of Oregon's forests and the wood products they produce. The Coast Range and West Cascades are among the most carbon rich regions in the world. The OGWC received significant input on the importance of protecting and increasing sequestration in Oregon's forests and reducing emissions from wildfires and harvest. ODF is in the process of developing a Climate Change and Carbon Plan (OCCP) that the Board of Forestry intends to adopt in November 2021.

Information about the OCCP can be found on ODF's [Climate Change and Carbon Plan Webpage](#). The draft outlined eight goals for positioning the

Department as a national leader in climate-smart and socially equitable

forest policies. Consistent with many of ODF's draft goals and the supporting actions, the Legislature should:

- Dedicate funding to help local communities design and implement urban forestry plans and actions that increase the extent and resilience of urban and community forests.

Canopy cover is an environmental justice issue. Trees in cities provide environmental and health benefits including improved air quality, reduced runoff into local streams and rivers, natural cooling, and reduced energy consumption. Recent research ([McDonald 2021](#)) found that low-income neighborhoods have less tree cover than high-income neighborhoods in 92 percent of U.S. cities evaluated. Studies show that communities of color and low-income households are more likely to be exposed to air pollutants, which

have been shown to cause and amplify respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses.

The Oregon Department of Forestry has had a federally funded [urban and community forests program](#) for 30 years that is designed to help communities in Oregon maintain and enhance their urban tree cover. ODF's Urban and Community Forestry program requested funding during the 2021 Legislative Session to expand their capacity to increase canopy cover with a focus on underserved communities in Oregon, the OGWC supports funding this request in the future.

**The greatest potential for increasing carbon sequestration in Oregon is associated with the management of Oregon's forests and the wood products they produce.**



- Adopt revisions to the Oregon Forest Practices Act to improve climate mitigation and adaptation outcomes on private lands in Oregon.

In 2020, Governor Brown brokered an agreement – the Private Forest Accord – between 13 conservation and fishing groups and 13 timber and forest products entities. The Accord led to the passage of bipartisan legislation charging the Governor with hosting a mediation process to develop recommended changes to the Oregon Forest Practices Act laws and to position the state to secure a statewide Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for threatened and endangered aquatic and riparian species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. The HCP would provide more regulatory certainty for landowners and long-term conservation benefits for fish and wildlife species. Changes to Oregon’s riparian buffers rules to benefit aquatic and riparian species would result in increased sequestration on Oregon’s private forest lands. The recommendations are due by the end of 2021 and are intended to be formalized through legislation during the 2022 session. The OGWC encourages all parties to consider the carbon benefits in addition to riparian species benefits when weighing policy options and developing recommendations.

Beyond the revisions recommended by the Forest Accord, the Department should periodically analyze and adopt additional warranted improvements in the Forest Practices Act to continue to improve climate and carbon sequestration outcomes in Oregon’s forests.

- Create a blue-ribbon panel to develop an all-lands strategic plan for incentivizing climate-smart forestry in Oregon’s forest while maintaining or enhancing Oregon’s harvested wood products infrastructure.

ODF’s draft OCCP identified a goal of advancing a just and equitable transition to climate-informed forestry that optimizes climate mitigation and adaptation, while maintaining a sustainable flow of wood products and ensuring long term benefits for Oregon’s forest products industry.

ODF is working on two studies to evaluate the net carbon sequestration consequences of different management scenarios, in terms of the amount of carbon that can be stored and potentially lost. One is being led by American Forests in partnership with the US Forest Service, the Canadian Forest Service, Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science, and Michigan State University. The other is being led by USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station.

The OGWC recommends that ODF evaluate a range of scenarios including: lengthening harvest rotations on state and private forest lands; implementing forest resilience treatments in fire-prone forests; and reforesting understocked stands and riparian floodplain habitats; increasing protections for mature and old growth forests as well as areas with high carbon storage potential and co-benefits for threatened and endangered species and improved water quality. The effects of the forest management scenarios on the amount of carbon stored in long-lived wood products, impacts on short- and long-term fiber supplies, and potential leakage associated with shifting harvest to other jurisdictions should be analyzed as part of these evaluations.



To build on these two studies, the Legislature should fund and the state should convene a blue-ribbon panel to develop a strategic plan for how to best facilitate adoption of the climate-smart forest management strategies that show the most climate mitigation and adaptation promise across all lands

in Oregon. Oregon’s forest owners, managers, forest products industry members and workforce are diverse with different goals, needs, constraints, and opportunities related to strategies that could be deployed to increase carbon sequestration in Oregon’s forests. It will be especially critical here to take a systems-based approach that pays careful attention to the needs for the industry as a whole. Strategies that protect and increase carbon stocks and provide critical community co-benefits, while maintaining or enhancing Oregon’s harvested wood products infrastructure and workforce, should be prioritized and well resourced.

- Develop a strategic plan for expanding capacity for reforestation in Oregon.

Reforestation, including adding trees to understocked stands, reforesting after wildfires, and planting trees in previously forested lands (e.g., riparian areas), has significant potential to increase sequestration in natural and working lands.

Globally, nationally, and locally, there is significant and growing interest in ambitious tree planting goals. Recent research estimates that an additional 1.86 (Graves et al. 2020) to 3.43 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e ([Cook-Patton et al. 2020](#); [ReforestationHub.org](#)) could be sequestered per year in Oregon through reforestation of forests and former forest lands such as riparian habitats.

Achieving this level of ambition would require significant expansion of capacity for seed collection, seedling production, workforce development, and improvements in pre- and post-planting practices that would require public support and incentives for landowners.

The need for increased capacity for seedling production is already being felt in Oregon following the large 2020 fires. The OGWC commends the Legislature’s investment of \$5 million appropriation to the ODF’s Private Forests Division for post-2020 wildfire reforestation. In a typical year, around 40 million seedlings are planted after harvest in Oregon; ODF estimates that somewhere between 80 and 140 million additional seedlings may be needed to reforest just the non-federal lands in Oregon that burned in 2020 ([Oregon Public Broadcasting, 2021](#)). ODF should consider working with neighboring states to develop the strategic plan for expanding capacity for reforestation, and the Legislature should invest as needed in implementation of the plan.

- Expand forest resiliency treatments to reduce emissions from wildfire, reduce mortality from drought, prevent increased pest outbreaks, and make our forests and communities more resilient.

**Reforestation, including adding trees to understocked stands, reforesting after wildfires, and planting trees in previously forested lands, has significant potential to increase sequestration in natural and working lands.**

### **Longer Fire Seasons are Putting More Oregon Communities at Risk**

In 2018, the [Oregon Climate Change Research Institute](#) described that fire seasons have lengthened “over each of the last four decades, from 23 days in the 1970s, to 43 days in the 1980s, 84 days in the 1990s, and 116 days in the 2000s.”

As described in the 2019 report from Governor Brown’s Council on Wildfire Response, “Wildfire has been and will remain a permanent part of life in the western states... Over a century of land management practices and changing policy, starting with the removal of tribal communities and subsequent loss of their controlled burning practices, followed by widespread fire suppression and shifts in land use, has enabled fuels to accumulate far beyond historic conditions. Population growth has increased human-caused ignitions, putting people and communities in harm’s way. Additionally, fire seasons have become longer, drier and hotter, owing to climate impacts...current conditions are out of balance and demand a swift and enduring response.” The OGWC commends the



Legislature’s 2021 investment in a comprehensive strategy to address this concern. As noted earlier, the state’s goals for net sequestration should be updated when this plan is complete and funding levels are known to factor in the net impacts of treatments to increase resilience and reduce emissions from wildfires.

- Expand the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program to include support for forest landowners.

As described above, the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program is designed to provide voluntary incentives to farmers and ranchers to support practices that maintain or enhance agricultural and natural resource outcomes on agricultural lands. The Legislature should expand the program and increase funding levels to provide similar support for family forest landowners.

*D) Increase protection and restoration of carbon-rich tidally influenced coastal ecosystems through investments in updating estuary management plans and conservation and restoration of tidal wetlands.*

“Blue carbon” collectively refers to Oregon’s coastal wetland ecosystems—including kelp forests, seagrass beds, marshes, scrub-shrub wetlands, and forested swamps—which serve as important natural carbon sinks. According to the [Pacific Northwest Blue Carbon Working Group](#), rates of “carbon sequestration have been shown to be very high in tidal wetlands.” A recent study ([Kauffman et al. 2020](#)) documented that carbon stocks in forested tidal wetlands in the Pacific Northwest are comparable on a per acre basis to carbon stocks in the region’s terrestrial old growth forests. Since the 1850s, 58 percent of Oregon’s emergent tidal wetlands and over 70 percent of Oregon’s forested tidal wetlands—

combined just over 70,000 acres—have been converted to other land uses reducing or eliminating their ability to sequester more carbon (Beers et al 2021). In addition to carbon sequestration, Oregon’s blue carbon ecosystems provide a range of social, economic, and environmental benefits, such as fish/shellfish rearing sites, buffers against sea-level rise and amelioration of ocean acidification.

### The Outside Importance of Forested Tidal Wetlands

For every thousand acres of restored forested tidal wetlands roughly 212,500 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e could be sequestered by 2050, while providing significant benefits to fish and wildlife.

DLCD has established a no net loss of intertidal and tidal marshes under Statewide Planning Goal 16 (Estuarine Resources) and the Department of State Lands implements a no net loss of wetlands under the state’s Removal-Fill Law. In addition to continued work to halt coastal wetland loss, the OGWC recommends that the state

invest in state sea level rise plan development and implementation. Planning for the landward migration of tidal wetlands and targeted investments in incentives for conservation and restoration of former tidal wetlands would provide significant per acre climate mitigation as well as adaptation benefits.

Sea level rise planning should be advanced through existing Oregon policy frameworks, including Oregon’s natural resources planning (Goal 5), estuary management planning (Goal 16), and shorelands planning (Goal 17) DLCD programs. Researchers ([Brophy and Ewald 2017](#)) have already mapped potential areas for landward migration of tidal wetlands under several sea-level rise scenarios that can serve as a starting point for planning for future land use policies and programs. Several coastal communities have identified the need to update their Estuary Management Plans (EMPs). In 2020, DLCD received a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to develop Estuary Resilience Actions Plans for Coos Bay and Tillamook Bay. Such efforts should focus on the ability of healthy estuarine areas to provide vital community, ecosystem, and the economic benefits while performing

long-term carbon sequestration. The OGWC recommends the state take the lessons learned through these NFWF funded pilot projects coast wide. We recognize that planning for sea level rise will be complicated, controversial, and will take significant time and resources. The Legislature should allocate sufficient funding for this work to ensure adequate state and local capacity needed for success.



*E) Fund a study of the workforce and the economic development potential of carrying out the recommendations in this report and expand climate-smart protection, restoration, and improved management training and technical assistance programs.*

Repeatedly, feedback from Tribes and stakeholders identified the need for added technical assistance capacity. As identified in our [2020 Biennial Report to the Oregon Legislature](#), getting Oregon’s workforce trained and ready for a low-carbon economy will pay dividends over time.

Currently, federal, state, locally generated public funding as well as private funding support technical assistance in Oregon. NRCS and the U.S. Forest Service provide technical assistance to land managers. NOAA and National Estuarine Research Reserve Programs provide tools, trainings, and workshops to communities and professionals regarding blue carbon. For example, NOAA assisted partners on the Southern Flow Corridor project in Tillamook restore tidal wetland habitat for Coho salmon and reduce flooding in the nearby community. Among other state agencies that provide technical natural resources assistance, OWEB works closely with ODA to administer capacity funding for both Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Watershed Councils. Oregon State University’s Extension Service provides technical assistance services across the state. They receive funding from the state, from counties, and from federal sources.

However, staff resources in these federal, state, and local organizations—and grant dollars to land managers for technical assistance—are already stretched thin with existing workloads. In order to meaningfully increase carbon sequestration on natural and working lands, the Legislature should invest additional funds to increase support for technical assistance providers.

**Monitoring results (Brophy et al 2019) from the Tillamook Estuary Southern Flow Corridor project estimate that restoration of the project’s estuarine habitats could store an additional 100,000 tons CO<sub>2</sub>e/year — the equivalent of taking 21,000 cars off the road for a year.**

Where new natural resources workforce programs are needed, they should prioritize creating real pathways to careers that provide family-wage employment for local communities and be developed in partnership with the Oregon State Apprentice and Training Council as appropriate. Any new training programs should prioritize creating real pathways to careers that provide family-wage employment for local communities, and should include union labor and give priority to diversity and equity in the workforce, including communities of color and historically underserved communities and any workers whose livelihoods are disrupted by climate mitigation and adaptation policies.

#### **4. Invest in improvements to Oregon’s natural and working lands inventory data and research into climate-smart management practices.**

Technical experts recommended the state advocate for inventory improvements at the federal level, invest in research to improve state specific sequestration rates, and where needed address gaps in priority federal improvements, especially where the improvements would benefit multiple priority outcomes for Oregon (e.g. investments in eelgrass monitoring). The [World Resources Institute \(2020\)](#) prepared an overview of the current State Inventory Tool and options the federal government, states and others have made—or are planning to make—to improve LULUCF inventory data.

The technical experts we consulted identified several improvements that should be made in Oregon’s inventory over time:

**Forests.** ODF worked with USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station to produce the [Oregon Forest Ecosystem Carbon Inventory: 2001-2016 Report](#) in 2018. The report identified a number of inventory improvements that should be made for Oregon’s forests including increasing the plot density and frequency Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data collection. In 2020, the ODF expanded its partnership with the FIA program to increase the number of inventory plots on state forests lands. The state should request that the federal government increase the density of plots on private lands as well and the remeasurement frequency on all forest lands. If federal funds are not available, the Legislature should fund these improvements. Finally, ODF should better integrate the FIA plot data currently used to inform the forest GHG inventory data with remotely-sensed data to paint a more complete picture of net sequestration in Oregon’s forest lands.

**Blue Carbon.** The Pacific Northwest Blue Carbon Working Group is advancing several studies to improve GHG sequestration rate coefficients for Oregon’s blue carbon pathways. To build on this work the OGWC recommends the Legislature make additional investments in the:

- (1) development of a comprehensive map of restored, restorable and least disturbed tidal wetlands;
- (2) completion of more consistent mapping of submerged aquatic vegetation in all Oregon estuaries;
- (3) completion of more consistent mapping of kelp in Oregon’s territorial waters; and
- (4) research to better understand the sequestration benefits of protecting and restoring eelgrass and kelp forests.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has an active eelgrass monitoring program (SEACOR) in a subset of Oregon estuaries that could be expanded to create a coast wide eelgrass dataset. In addition to informing our natural and working lands inventory, these projects would also support improved fisheries management, coastal adaptation planning, and opportunities for addressing ocean acidification and hypoxia.



**Croplands and Rangelands.** Due to the wide variety of crops and management practices applied in Oregon’s agricultural and range lands and the variability in environmental factors that influence soil carbon sequestration rates, inventorying soil carbon fluxes is extremely challenging. [Mertens and Moore \(2021\)](#) recommend using a combination of existing datasets supplemented with additional survey data, field samples and modeling to estimate the baseline and periodic soil carbon flux and N2O emissions.

Generally speaking, for each crop and different management practice they recommend:

- Utilizing existing models to estimate the range of per acre carbon flux and N2O emissions on a county-by-county basis for each crop for different soil health practices.
- Estimating the total acres of each crop under different practices by county. One approach to do this is the Operational Tillage Information System (OpTIS), an automated system that maps tillage, residue cover, winter cover, and soil health practices using remote sensing data.<sup>10</sup>
- Estimating the proportion of cropland under different environmental, soil, and irrigation characteristics.
- Extrapolating the per acre carbon flux and N2O soil emissions by multiplying it with the total acres of each crop/practice in each county apportioned according to the environmental and soil characteristics.
- Finally, they recommend conducting a more rigorous sensitivity analysis to ensure the proposed methodology can provide reasonable estimates and that any uncertainties do not outweigh expected impacts. The analysis should include additional sample locations, crops, and counties. Investments in additional field monitoring for model calibration and additional crops (specific to Oregon), whether for COMET-Farm or other models, would greatly improve estimates.

**Land Use and Land Use Change.** ODF currently assesses changes in land use periodically, about every five years. The Legislature should fund the agency to increase the frequency of evaluating land use change as a critical component of development of an accurate land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) net sequestration inventory through the integration of active remote-sensing data. Using active remote-sensing tools like digital aerial photography or LIDAR would improve estimates of carbon fluxes from forest loss or reforestation, and would reduce the uncertainty around estimates of carbon fluxes from changes in land use. These data would improve the sequestration and storage goal estimates currently provided in the State Inventory Tool for each of the natural and working lands categories, and better inform the activity-based metrics and goals.



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<sup>10</sup> OpTIS-based data are currently available for the years 2005 through 2019 for the U.S. Corn Belt. A new dataset released in June 2021 covers additional geography with notable expansions into Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Investments would be needed to expand the tool for use in Oregon.



## CONCLUSIONS

Natural and working lands can and must be part of comprehensive action to mitigate climate change. If Oregon is able to get back on track to meeting our 2035 and 2050 sector-based emission reduction goals, and achieves the sequestration goals proposed here, Oregon could be net neutral and fully contributing to climate repair before 2040, positioning the state as the U.S. leader on climate mitigation. If carefully designed, strategies for increasing sequestration in Oregon's natural and working lands and waters will also provide multiple co-benefits from increased resilience, to improved air quality, better fish and wildlife habitat, jobs and economic development, and lower health and energy costs. While significant funding will be needed to achieve the goals, the financial savings from avoiding the worst impacts of climate change and the value of the goods and services associated with improved natural and working lands will far exceed those costs.

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## APPENDIX A: OUTREACH METHODS AND RESULTS

With significant support from the Oregon Water Enhancement Board (OWEB) and the Departments of Agriculture and Forestry, the Oregon Global Warming Commission hosted a suite of engagement opportunities to gather stakeholder and tribal perspectives. Below is a summary of the methods and links to results and/or presentations.

**Public Comments.** Written comments regarding the natural and working lands proposal were received, reviewed, and posted in the materials for all Commission meetings. Opportunities for additional public comment regarding our natural and working lands proposal were provided and comments were received during all of our Commission meetings back to June 2020. Public comment records are available on the [OGWC website](#).

**Natural and Working Lands Targeted Survey.** To gather information on current conservation and management practices related to carbon sequestration, as well as incentives, opportunities and barriers supporting these practices, a survey was circulated to Oregon Tribes, agricultural landowners/ land managers, forest landowners, technical assistance providers, agriculture/forest interest groups, conservation organizations and environmental justice groups.

The survey allowed participants to self-identify location and group affiliation. The survey included a set of multiple choice and narrative questions intended to gather information on practices, incentives and information sources use now and interested in utilizing in the future. Participants were also asked about barriers to utilizing practices/ incentives and were given the opportunity to write in additional considerations around policy making and practices. The survey was distributed to over 200 statewide and local organizational representatives in December 2020 with a request to forward the survey to their constituents.

The OGWC received a total of 737 responses from the groups identified above. All survey results, as well as the complete list of survey questions, [are available online](#).

Narrative responses were analyzed by response group using an inductive, qualitative approach (Maxwell 2013). Responses were categorized into common theme groupings that represented the range of recommendations offered. Bar graphs visually compare response categories between all groups. This gives insight on common and differing viewpoints between groups, as well as the range of responses for each narrative question asked. More detailed methods and results, including how response categories were grouped under each theme, and representative quotes, [are available online](#).

**Online Survey.** In addition to the targeted landowner survey, a more general Natural and Working Lands Outreach Survey was posted on the Global Warming Commission website between January 25 and May 3, 2021. A total of 122 individuals responded to at least one of the six broad, narrative-style questions that focused on opportunities and barriers to carbon sequestration in Oregon. The list of questions and all responses [are available online](#).

**Focused Discussions.** Focused discussion groups were convened to better understand the practices and incentive and policy options that may be necessary for Oregon to achieve a carbon sequestration goal; inform the success indicators; and to better understand the results of the targeted survey.

A total of 96 individuals participated in eight focused discussions (8-15 participants per group) in April 2021. Four of the discussions targeted group of individuals representing: Conservation organizations; Forestry; Environmental Justice; Landowner interest groups. The remaining four were organized by region – Coast, Willamette Valley, Southern Oregon, Eastern Oregon and included a cross-section of agricultural landowners; technical assistance providers; land trusts; and non-profit organizations.

Background materials provided in advance to participants invited to focused discussions are available at: <https://www.keeporegoncool.org/natural-working-lands>. All discussions were facilitated using a common set of questions focused on participant ideas to achieve long-term sequestration goals, benefits, incentives, policy change, barriers, and other feedback to improve carbon sequestration on Oregon’s natural and working lands. Participants also reviewed and reflected on the results of the targeted survey, providing insights and perspective on the results. Recommendations were categorized into themes through an iterative process by OWEB staff. Results are summarized and [available online](#). In addition to general feedback identified here, participants also identified practices that should be considered in addition to those sent out in the survey, particularly on forest lands from the forestry session. The Environmental Justice focused discussion also highlighted a number of suggestions and also suggested organizations to further engage in next steps amongst Oregon’s environmental justice organizations.

**Tribal Engagement.** To gather input from Oregon’s Tribal Nations, Oregon Global Warming Commission Chair Macdonald attended a government-to-government Natural Resources Working Group in the fall of 2020. A letter was sent to all federally recognized Tribes in Oregon in 2021 inviting them to participate in a focused discussion group and to present to the commission. Robert Brunoe, Natural Resource Director of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs presented at the April 2021 Commission meeting and Chair Brigham, Chair of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation presented at the May 2021 meeting. Their presentations and the OGWC discussion can be found can be accessed on the OGWC meeting webpage: <https://www.keeporegoncool.org/meetings> Chair Macdonald also hosted several individual meetings with tribal leaders and invited all and through presentations and discussions at OGWC meetings.

**State and Federal Agency Presentations.** Several state and federal agencies have a mission relevant to implementing practices, policies, and programs regarding carbon sequestration on natural and working lands, and were invited to provide feedback about the natural and working lands goal to the OGWC.

Participants included:

April 2021:

- Stephanie Page, ODA
- Chair Jim Kelly, Board of Forestry
- State Forester Peter Daugherty, ODF
- Board Member Bruce Buckmaster, OWEB
- Audrey Hatch, OWEB

May 2021:

- Paul Anderson, Pacific Northwest Station Director, US Forest Service
- Barry Bushue, BLM Oregon-Washington State Director

June 2021:

- Ron Alvarado, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Their presentations and discussions with the Oregon Global Warming Commission can be accessed on the [OGWC meeting webpage](#)).

**Technical Experts.** Since December 2020, the OGWC has heard from the following technical experts:

- James Mulligan, Senior Scientist, World Resources Institute (December 2020)
- Dr. Rose Graves, Portland State University (December 2020; June 2021)
- Dr. Ryan Haugo, The Nature Conservancy (December 2020; June 2021)
- Dr. Vivek Shandas, Research Director, Institute for Sustainable Solutions, Portland State University (April 2021)
- Dr. Thomas DeLuca, Dean, School of Forestry, Oregon State University (April 2021)
- Dr. Jennifer Moore, Research Soil Scientist, USDA Agricultural Research Station (April 2021)
- Dr. Steve Crooks, Principal, Wetland Science and Coastal Management, Silvestrum Climate Associates (April 2021)

The following additional technical experts provided technical support for the development of the natural and working lands proposal:

Blue Carbon:

- Craig Cornu, Institute for Applied Ecology
- Laura Brophy, Institute for Applied Ecology
- Pew Charitable Trusts

Crop and Rangelands:

- Judith Callens, ODA
- Diana Walker, ODA
- Markus Kleber, OSU
- Cory Owens, NRCS
- Mike Mertens, EcoTrust

Forest:

- Danny Norlander, ODF
- Andrew Yost, ODF
- Marin Palmer, U.S. Forest Service, Regional 6
- Chad Davis, U.S. Forest Service, Regional 6
- Glenn Christensen, U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station
- Taylor Lucey, U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station
- Andrew Gray, U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station
- Olaf Kuegler, U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station

## **APPENDIX B: CONSERVATION PRACTICES IDENTIFIED THROUGH SURVEYS AND FOCUSED DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AGENCY EXPERTS AS CONTRIBUTING TO CARBON SEQUESTRATION**

### Agriculture

- Biochar amendments
- Climate-Friendly Nutrient Management
- Compost Application (Or Other Organic Amendments Like Biochar)
- Composting of Manure and Other Organic “Wastes”
- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Cover Cropping
- Hedgerow and Riparian Plantings
- Mulching
- No Till and Reduced Tillage
- Rotational Grazing
- Silvopasture and Agroforestry
- Strip Cropping
- Sustainable and Organic Production Systems

### Forestry

- Forest Stewardship Council Management Practices
- Fire prone Forest Health Treatments
- Green Tree Retention
- Lengthening Rotations
- Patch and Selective Logging
- Pest and Pathogen Management
- Post Wildfire Management
- Reforestation
- Riparian and Wetland Buffers
- Tree Planting

### Natural Lands

- Algae Farming
- Eelgrass Habitat Protection
- Emergent Tidal Wetland Restoration
- Forested Tidal Wetland Restoration
- Grassland Protection and Restoration
- Kelp restoration
- Pollinator habitat restoration
- Restoration of shrub-steppe habitats
- Riparian Tree Planting
- Upland Forest Protection and Reforestation of Understocked Stands
- Watershed Management