



May 10, 2021

Chair Macdonald and members of the Oregon Global Warming Commission:

On behalf of the Oregon Climate Action Plan (OCAP) Coalition, we are providing shared recommendations for practices, incentives and other policy options Oregon should pursue to achieve a natural and working lands emissions and sequestration goal. The OCAP Coalition engages at every step of the Executive Order on Climate Action (EO 20-04) implementation process, working to ensure the strongest possible outcomes for our climate, our communities and our economy.

Overarching Goals and Objectives

Increase adoption of practices that sequester carbon in the soil or reduce GHG emissions on Oregon's natural and working lands.

The adopted policies and practices should contribute to Oregon's path to reduce its GHG emissions (1) at least 45 percent below 1990 emissions levels by 2035; and (2) at least 80 percent below 1990 emissions levels by 2050.

Create and fund management and conservation programs to support practices that increase Oregon's overall sequestration of carbon in the soils and waters and reduction of other greenhouse (GHG) gases. These practices provide co-benefits such as enhanced soil health and productivity, soil water retention and quality, enhanced fish and wildlife habitat.

The development and implementation of these programs and practices should focus on public health improvements and economic opportunities, prioritize disadvantaged communities, and reduce risks to disadvantaged and vulnerable communities from climate impacts.

Facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration, both public and private, to advance these recommendations and engage in soil health, carbon sequestration and climate resiliency programs that would benefit Oregon's agricultural lands and watersheds. Stakeholder engagement must include: farmers and ranchers engaged in a variety of types of agricultural practices including organic, conventional, regenerative and sustainable practices; BIPOC producers and farmworkers; soil and climate scientists; environmental and water advocates. Engage stakeholders including local governments, irrigation districts, state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations, etc. Engage in regional discussions considering collaborative and multi-state efforts.

AGRICULTURE

Policy:

Create and fund management programs to support agricultural practices that increase sequestration of carbon in the soil and reduction of greenhouse (GHG) gas emissions. These practices provide multiple co-benefits such as: enhanced soil health and productivity, water retention and water quality, reduced erosion, microbial balance, pollinator, fish and wildlife habitat, and reduction of harmful algae blooms.

Practices and Incentives

1. Develop and periodically update an Oregon Agriculture Climate Resiliency and Mitigation Plan as a basis to strategically plan and implement future sequestration and emission goals and respond to existing and future climate impacts.
2. Support expansion of technical assistance by state and federal agencies, soil and water conservation districts, Oregon State University Extension, and non-governmental organizations to promote soil health practices that contribute to carbon sequestration such as:
 - a) reduced tillage or no-till,
 - b) rotational grazing,
 - c) cover cropping,
 - d) mulch and compost application,
 - e) hedgerow and riparian plantings,
 - f) silvopasture or agroforestry,
 - g) growth of deep rooted annual and perennial crops and rangeland grasses,
 - h) reduced and selective chemical inputs,
 - i) diversified cropping systems, and
 - j) other organic and regenerative practices.
3. Invest in programs to support adoption of practices which reduce GHG emissions or otherwise mitigate climate change:
 - a) Climate friendly nutrient management to reduce nitrous oxide emissions;
 - b) Alternative manure management in dairy, poultry and livestock production;
 - c) Organic waste composting systems;
 - d) Sustainable and organic production systems;
 - e) On farm strategies to reduce fossil fuel use such as reduced tillage and renewable energy systems;
 - f) Production systems which reduce or eliminate the use of black plastic;
 - f) Irrigation modernization and other water and energy conservation strategies;
 - g) Practices that predict and preempt insect pressure and outcompete invasive weed species, rather than using fossil-fuel based pesticides and delivery systems;
 - h) Climate-related wildfire prevention on agricultural and range lands.

4. Build on ODA's planned [Soil Health Baseline Assessment](#) and other existing tools to guide policy and program priorities:

- a) Expand the planned [Soil Health Baseline Assessment](#) to include soil microbial health;
- b) Use the Moore et al. report, "[Potential for Conservation Practices to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sequester Carbon on Croplands and Grazing Lands in Oregon,](#)" as a reference guide for generating priorities and identifying research needs;
- c) Use existing estimating and mapping tools to estimate the potential for soil carbon sequestration on agricultural lands.

5. Encourage the Oregon Legislature to adopt Healthy Soils Legislation that would create a Soil Health Grant Program or other incentive programs to fund the implementation of soil health practices including those that promote carbon sequestration. Consider models from other states such as New Mexico, Washington and California. In addition to funding for implementation of practices, the Program should include funding for research, education, demonstration, and technical assistance. The Program structure should provide technical assistance to BIPOC producers for the grant application process; prioritize distribution of funding to historically disadvantaged communities; and support community-based and urban farm projects supporting youth and BIPOC farmers.

6. Support Oregon's Land Use Planning Program and other efforts to protect Oregon's agricultural and other natural and working lands, to reduce GHG emissions and assure their potential for carbon sequestration, in ways such as:

- a) Significantly reducing the number of non-agriculture related uses permitted on lands zoned "exclusive farm use" (EFU) and allowing the conversion of these lands to non-resource uses only under limited circumstances;
- b) Maintaining compact urban growth boundaries, allowing expansion onto natural and working lands only when proven necessary;
- c) Preventing and/or mitigating impacts of major public and private facilities such as highways, pipelines, energy production and storage, etc.;
- d) Providing sustainable funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program;
- e) Supporting land trusts and other organizations engaged in farmland conservation, farm and ranch succession planning, and assistance and support to new farmers.

7. When natural and working lands are proposed for conversion to non-resource uses, or when major public facilities are proposed, the decision-making criteria shall include an assessment and mitigation of climate impacts, including greenhouse gas emission consequences and loss of carbon sequestration potential.

WATER AND WATERSHED HEALTH

Policy:

Develop watershed health and management plans and programs from a climate perspective. These plans and programs should address carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and associated co-benefits such as forest health, groundwater storage, improved watershed health and water quality, and enhanced fish and wildlife habitat.

Practices and Incentives

1. Preserve, restore, and protect floodplains, wetlands, riparian buffers, and estuaries to promote carbon sequestration.
2. Encourage the Governor and the Legislature to fund the necessary staff positions and programs to support carbon sequestration, emissions reduction, and other climate mitigation practices in Oregon's aquatic habitats.
3. State agencies should incorporate climate criteria into water agency grant programs and dedicate staff to incorporating climate change mitigation and sequestration objectives into agency programs.

Signed by member organizations of the Agriculture and Water Policy Sub-table of the Oregon Climate Action Plan (OCAP) Coalition,

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