



March 24, 2021

To: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

From: Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD)

Re: **Support SB 541 – Policy on Greenhouse Gas Sequestration**

Chair Beyer and Committee Members,

OACD represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, local governments with county wide elected boards. The Districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by supporting voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners, managers, and others as well as federal, state, and nonprofit partners.

The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) supports the concept in SB 541 which would make it a policy of the state to include atmospheric carbon sequestered (captured and stored) by the lands and waters of this state, including natural and working lands, such as Oregon's forests and agriculture lands, in any calculation to determine progress towards the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals established by this section.

OACD supports the recognition of carbon sequestration as an important tool in addressing climate change, particularly on our natural and working lands. There is a large potential for sequestering carbon on these lands which should not be ignored. A good example is building healthy soils to sequester carbon through a variety of good management practices such as cover cropping and minimizing tillage. Building healthy soil also has several associated benefits such as improved farmland productivity and less need for chemical inputs as well as improved water retention, and improved water quality.

It is important to recognize that there are important ongoing actions in the state that can support sequestration in the future. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board is addressing climate mitigation projects in their grant programs funded by lottery dollars. The Oregon Global Warming Commission is also addressing potential strategies in their natural and working lands study to address greenhouse gas reductions. Furthermore,

the Department of Environmental Quality is working on rules to address greenhouse gases, and in the rulemaking process it is becoming evident that sequestration is an important part of our future efforts. SB 541 could provide an important policy to help move these efforts forward.

We acknowledge that as written, SB 541 could take some pressure off the need to reduce direct emissions to the atmosphere. From our perspective, keeping a given amount of greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere has an equivalent effect on climate whether it comes from reducing direct emissions or sequestering greenhouse gases. There will be caps on emitters through the DEQ Climate Protection Plan (Cap and Reduce) rulemaking. We think it is important to understand that promoting sequestration will allow us to achieve better cumulative results than if we focus on emissions alone.

We suggest one revision to section 1, paragraph 2 of the bill as follows:

(2) The Legislative Assembly declares that it is the policy of this state to include ~~atmospheric carbon~~ **greenhouse gases** sequestered by the lands and waters of this state, including Oregon's forests, desert lands and territorial sea, in any calculation to determine progress towards the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals established by this section.

Changing the term "atmospheric carbon" to "greenhouse gases" recognizes the full range of greenhouse gasses that can benefit from sequestration.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input.

Jan Lee, Executive Director
Oregon Association of Conservation Districts