



Joint Committee On Ways and Means, Subcommittee On Natural Resources  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

April 21, 2021

Co-chairs Taylor and Reardon and members of the Committee:

We are providing testimony on behalf of the Oregon Climate Action Plan (OCAP) Coalition, to express our strong support for, and request your support for, several programs, projects and positions which should be included in Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) budget in [SB 5502](#).

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. The following programs, projects and positions will help ODA and our state achieve the new climate change mitigation and GHG reduction goals and will promote carbon sequestration by Oregon's natural and working landscapes, including agriculture, which are directives in the EO 20-04:

- 1) Secure funding for ODA's requested [Soil Health Position \(POP 365\)](#) which would provide in-house expertise at ODA to improve soil health on Oregon's agricultural lands. This new Soil Health position at ODA would:
  - a) Support implementation of ODA's climate change plan which was drafted in response to the new Oregon Climate Action Plan;
  - b) Advance Oregon agricultural practices that promote soil health through education, technical assistance and coordination;
  - c) Pursue funding from agency partners to support more widespread adoption of soil health practices;
  - d) Recommend additional policies and programs in Oregon to support soil health, using other state policies as models; and
  - e) Collaborate on research to understand Oregon's soil carbon sequestration rates and how various practices can promote carbon sequestration and climate resilience.

Our understanding is that [Soil Health Position \(POP 365\)](#), will likely be funded with federal support for the next biennium, so it would be included in ODA's budget as a federally funded position and therefore eliminates the need to fund that \$225,000 from the general fund for the 21-23 biennium. Only the revenue and expenditure authorizations are necessary for federal funds to be received in the current budget.

- 2) Fund ODA's requested [Soil Health Baseline Assessment \(POP 370\)](#) which would improve ODA's understanding of Oregon's agricultural soil health, which will help the state accomplish the baseline assessment of soil carbon levels mandated in Executive Order 20-04. The Agency has requested \$225,000 from the General Fund, which was included in the Governor's Recommended Budget. The baseline assessment will include soils' ability to hold water, soil compaction levels, carbon stored in the soil, and soil pH. This assessment could help inform how partner organizations such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts prioritize outreach, technical assistance, and funding to support those strategies. It will prioritize areas of soil health to focus on in outreach, education, and policy development efforts. And it could help farmers and ranchers access offset programs and other incentives developed as part of a Climate Protection Program.
- 3) Provide *additional funding in ODA's budget* for the agency to coordinate with other agencies and engage stakeholders and develop a strategic "Climate Mitigation and Resiliency Plan for Oregon Agriculture," which would propose goals, policies and implementation measures for ODA's work related to climate change mitigation. The Plan should be aligned with the proposal related to carbon sequestration on natural and working lands, currently being developed by the Oregon Global Warming Commission (OGWC), but there is additional work needed. A Mitigation and Resiliency Plan is needed for Oregon Agriculture to address the current and future impacts of climate change to assure viability of Oregon's farms and ranches. Work on the Plan should begin soon and must include broad stakeholder and community engagement, and as well as intergovernmental and agency coordination. Approximately \$225,000-250,000 is recommended for this work over the 21-23 biennium, which would either 1) provide funding for ODA to participate in a process led by [Oregon Solutions](#), or 2) provide funding for a limited duration position within the agency over 18 months.
- 4) Fund the Governor's requested [Chief Equity Officer position \(POP 130\)](#). EO 20-04 draws attention to the disproportionate effects climate change will have on communities who have been under-resourced and underrepresented in decision-making processes. EO 20-04 also directs state agencies to "[p]rioritize actions that will help vulnerable populations and impacted communities adapt to climate change impacts" in their budgets (Section 3(C)(2)). Advancing equity is a top priority for the OCAP Coalition. The Equity Officer position would help ODA engage with and better serve historically underserved communities that are impacted by ODA's programs, which will be increasingly important as communities work to adapt to the changing climate. This position would enable ODA to partner with community organizations and advocacy groups to gauge the needs of all community members with a particular focus on

responding to the needs of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities and other communities historically marginalized by government policies, in turn giving ODA the opportunity to support climate-resilient communities.

Please prioritize these programs, projects and positions in [SB 5502](#), ODA's budget bill.

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

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*Addie Candib, Pacific Northwest Regional Director, American Farmland Trust*

*Lisa Arkin, Executive Director, Beyond Toxics*

*Amy Wong, Policy Director, Friends of Family Farmers*

*Jan Lee, Executive Director, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts*

*Megan Kemple, Co-Director, Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network*

*Karen Lewotsky, Rural Partnerships and Water Policy Director, Oregon Environmental Council*

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