



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 102-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

February 8, 2022

To: [Senate Interim Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery](#)
[Senator Jeff Golden](#), Chair
[Senator Bill Kenemer](#), Vice-Chair

Re: [SB 1534](#) – Natural and Working Lands and Waters - Support

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments in support for *the Natural and Working Lands and Water* bill (SB 1534). The League of Women Voters of Oregon (LWVOR) bases our support on the position statements approved by the state and national League of Women Voters. The positions that clearly support SB 1534 are included at the end of this letter.

The Oregon Global Warming Commission (OGWC) has thoroughly studied and reviewed the scientific literature on the issues concerning carbon sequestration in producing their [2021 Natural and Working Lands Proposal](#). [SB 1534](#) creates a framework to advance some of the strategies identified in that proposal.

These SB 1534 provisions conform to the League's positions for making policy decisions:

- Defines natural and working lands and waters (NWLW), and establishes the policy direction to advance carbon sequestration and resilience strategies.
- Directs the Oregon State University's *Institute for Natural Resources* to develop metrics for carbon storage, a NWLW carbon inventory baseline, and a NWLW study of the potential impact of increase carbon sequestration strategies on the workforce and economic development study.
- Directs state agencies to report on metrics and the inventory.
- Creates an NWLW advisory committee representing various stakeholders to advise the commission.
- Directs the Oregon Global Warming Commission to report back to the Legislature on the progress toward meeting the metrics.

Our previous comments on ODF's *Climate Change and Carbon Plan (CCCP)* called for the inclusion of activity-based metrics. In 2021, our budget letter on behalf of the Oregon Dept. of Energy (SB 5515) recommended that the Oregon Global Warming Commission be provided with additional staff to work on these issues.

We are supportive of the inclusion of various stakeholders, along with technical experts and OSU Institute for Natural Resources staff on the NWLW advisory committee. We feel the input from a variety of voices, especially those most likely to be impacted (environmental justice communities), will achieve the best outcome for climate resilience with economic considerations

factored in. The fact that this bill calls for incentives and voluntary actions to achieve carbon sequestration goals while assuring other ecological benefits is a strong reason we support it. We briefly expand on those benefits in each of the ways carbon is stored on natural and working lands.

Brown Carbon: rangeland and agricultural land

Practices that promote soil carbon sequestration and storage on farms and ranches follow four principles: minimize disturbance, maximize soil cover, maximize biodiversity, and maximize presence of living roots. These same soil carbon sequestration practices also promote healthy soils. The benefits of healthy soils include:

- Healthy soils increase crop yields.
- Healthy soils promote resilience from drought by storing more water and increasing the amount of water entering the soil from precipitation and irrigation.
- More water in the soil means less winter run-off, less soil erosion, and less sediment flow into streams and rivers, thus improving water quality.
- Healthy soils more efficiently store and recycle nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, reducing stream pollution.

Blue Carbon: wetlands, coastal and marine and coastal carbon storage

Important recent studies of the Pacific Northwest coastal systems show that we must move beyond types and carbon burial to consider all the pathways of the entire carbon cycle and the carbon reservoirs in the oceans and the coast. Recent reviews illustrate how the Pacific Northwest wetlands (including Northern California to the US-Canada border), are poorly represented in studies of carbon sequestration. Below ground carbon stocks are especially important in supporting the coastal ecosystem, from tidal forests to seagrass. These below ground stocks, with their considerable depth of stored carbon, are the temperature equivalent of the mangrove forests. Sitka spruce used to dominate tidal forests of the PNW and the removal of spruce has really been a severe detriment to the carbon cycle. Restoring forested wetland ecosystems capable of storing more carbon will provide an opportunity for combating rising sea levels. SB 1534 recommends increased carbon storage in coastal areas through conservation and improved management.

It will be essential that the proposed blue carbon inventory provide a careful analysis of various mitigation and management strategies. For coastal systems, engagement with a variety of state, county, and local land management agencies, watershed councils, NGOs and federal and Tribal partners will be needed. This review should include the PNW Coastal Blue Carbon Working Group and the Department of Land Conservation and Development's Coastal Division efforts, to develop estuary resilience plans for Coos and Tillamook Bays. Other ongoing federal/state partnerships with the Department of State Lands (DSL)'s South Slough Natural Estuarine Research Reserve and partnerships with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and other stakeholders are recognized in the Natural and Working Lands Proposal.

Green Carbon: forestlands

Climate change has already had an enormous economic impact on those who make their living from working forests. Wildfire, drought, pests and disease are a threat to a sustainable livelihood from timber and wood products throughout the state, especially in central and southern Oregon. Clearly, we must be proactive in addressing these threats by building up resilience in our forests. This bill supports reforestation and afforestation to increase carbon sinks. Planting in the appropriate locations with appropriate drought-tolerant species where there are no

trees is a wise policy. We also need to plan for trees in our urban areas to reduce the heat island effect. Regional tree plot data analysis provides needed information to determine incentives for the forest products industry. Protecting carefully selected areas with mature trees and riparian areas maximize carbon storage while providing habitat for a wide range of fish, wildlife, and preserving drinking water sources. The research this bill calls for helps Oregon to plan ahead for a hotter, dryer climate, manage our forests for health and resilience to wildfire, and ensures a viable forestry economy for the future.

League Positions

Our League positions supporting SB 1534 come from four topic areas corresponding to comments above.

Agriculture: The LWVUS believes that “agricultural policy should encourage a system of sustainable, regenerative agricultural production that moves toward an environmentally sound agricultural sector. This includes promoting stewardship to preserve and protect the country’s human and natural agricultural resources.”

Water: Concerning offshore and coastal management, the LWVOR “believes responsible and responsive government management of the public’s coastal and nearshore natural resources shall be based upon a complete environmental assessment, cumulative impact analysis, and baseline data specific to Oregon. And our water position includes The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that water is a resource that should be managed for the benefit of the public and as sustainable habitat for all life forms.

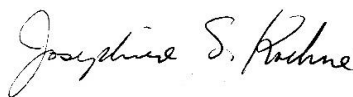
Forests: The LWVOR’s new forestry positions state “All benefits of the forests—ecological, human and economic—are inextricably interconnected. Healthy forests are essential to habitat for a diversity of plant and animal life, to the hydrologic cycle, and to carbon storage to mitigate global warming. In addition, healthy forests are essential to a forest-products industry with the jobs and goods they provide, and to the economic and aesthetic values of their recreational opportunities. The LWVOR supports laws and policies to ensure that forest management is carried out in a manner that will sustain healthy forests, streams and habitats.”

Climate: And lastly, in 2016, “the LWVUS supports aggressive efforts to restore balance to the planet’s climate systems by reducing the atmospheric carbon dioxide to 350 parts per million (ppm), the upper safe limit. The target set by scientists requires an immediate 8% global greenhouse gas emissions annually; in conjunction with carbon dioxide storage through mass reforestation, and soil management.”

We thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the Natural Working Lands and Waters bill, SB 1534, and ask for your support for this important bill.



Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR President



Josie Koehne
LWVOR Forestry Portfolio



Christine M. Moffitt, Ph.D.
Coos County LWV