



Oregon Legislative Assembly
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

February 7, 2022

Dear Oregon Senators and Representatives,

On behalf of the Oregon Climate Action Plan (OCAP) Coalition and our partner organizations, we are writing to express our strong support for the Natural and Working Lands Bill (SB 1534) and to respectfully request that you pass this critical legislation during the 2022 legislative session.

The Governor directed the Oregon Global Warming Commission (OGWC) to develop statewide goals for carbon sequestration and storage by Oregon's natural and working landscapes, including forests, wetlands, and agricultural lands, based on the best available science. OGWC engaged a wide array of stakeholders to gather input on what landowners and managers will require to make sure Oregon's natural and working lands can support rural economies, climate resilience, and carbon sequestration. As a result, OGWC released carbon sequestration goals along with strategies to meet them in this ["Natural and Working Lands Proposal."](#) Now, SB 1534 will provide a framework and resources for the recommendations to begin to be implemented in Oregon. SB 1534 lays the foundation for the creation of programs to increase carbon sequestration and resilience on Oregon's natural and working lands (NWL).

SB 1534 will enable Oregon's natural and working lands to be voluntarily managed as a resilient and robust carbon sink while supporting the health of our economy and communities and enhancing social equity and quality of life for Oregonians. The bill does the following:

1. Defines Natural & Working Lands (NWL) in Oregon Statute,
2. Declares that it is the policy of the state to increase carbon sequestration on NWL,
3. Directs the Oregon Global Warming Commission (OGWC) to create a Natural and Working Lands Advisory Committee,
4. Directs OSU's Institute for Natural Resources to a) develop a net carbon sequestration inventory for NWL, b) develop metrics for carbon sequestration in NWL, and c) study workforce and economic development potential of strategies to increase carbon sequestration in NWL, and
5. Requires the OGWC to report to the Oregon Legislature.

There is broad consensus among a wide array of stakeholders that natural and working lands are a *crucial* piece of ensuring a safe and resilient climate for Oregonians. Oregon can and should make investments in the future to protect rural economies, fish and wildlife, and drinking water supplies as we navigate changing environmental conditions. Below we outline specific benefits for forests, agriculture and water:

FORESTS

Oregon's forests represent a critical piece of the climate puzzle and must be a cornerstone of the state's efforts to address the worsening climate crisis. Increasing carbon sequestration on the landscape is one of our most impactful and cost-effective climate solutions and must be prioritized alongside rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors of the economy. Incentivizing better practices on forest lands offers a host of highly valuable co-benefits, such as economic support for rural communities, clean and abundant drinking water, increased biodiversity, and enhanced climate resilience for communities from the impacts of climate change, such as flooding, drought, and wildfire. SB 1534 is an important step for recognizing this climate solution, and ensuring its co-benefits are fully realized.

AGRICULTURE

Farmers and ranchers are on the front lines of climate change - both the impacts and as part of the solution. The extreme drought and heat of 2021 put farmers, our food system, and rural communities at risk. At the same time, soil carbon sequestration provides one of the most ready, cost-effective pathways for carbon sequestration as a climate mitigation strategy, especially in comparison to carbon capture technologies. Agricultural practices that sequester carbon provide additional benefits for climate resiliency, such as improved soil health which increases productivity and profitability of farming and ranching. Water quality and conservation, as well as improved wildlife habitat, are valuable co-benefits for the environment. The bill lays the foundation for the state to provide financial incentives for agricultural producers, along with a robust and knowledgeable technical assistance system. For farmers and ranchers in Oregon, the resilience of the economy, community, and environment are interconnected.

WATER

Tidally-influenced coastal ecosystems are critical along the Oregon coast, supporting coastal water quality, healthy fisheries, and protection from floods and storms. They also function as important natural "blue" carbon sinks, comparable to the Pacific Northwest's old growth forests ([Kauffman et al. 2020](#)). Because much of Oregon's tidal wetlands (and their carbon storage potential) have been lost to other land uses, investments in protecting and restoring these coastal ecosystems are essential for climate defense and the resilience of coastal communities.

We urge your support for SB 1534, the Natural and Working Lands Bill.

Signed by the following organizations,

1000 Friends of Oregon
American Farmland Trust
Beyond Toxics
Cascade-Volcanoes Chapter, Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Central Oregon Bitterbrush Broads Chapter, Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Climate, Energy and Environment Team, Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network
Climate Solutions
Coast Range Association
Community for Earth, First Unitarian Church
Douglas County Global Warming Coalition
Elders Climate Action, Oregon Chapter
Electrify Now
Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Oregon
Forest Web
Friends of Family Farmers
Interfaith Earthkeepers, Eugene/Springfield
Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Metro Climate Action Team
Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides
Oregon Business for Climate
Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network
Oregon Conservation Network
Oregon Environmental Council
Oregon League of Conservation Voters
Oregon Organic Coalition
Oregon Sierra Club
Oregon Wild
Rural Oregon Climate Political Action Committee
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now
Southern Oregon Pachamama Alliance
SunrisePDX
Worthy Garden Club
350 Deschutes
350 Eugene
350 Oregon Central Coast
350 PDX
350 Salem
350 Washington County