

SB 530 Needs More Work

SB 530 advances concepts for promoting the use of the state's natural and working lands (N&WL) to mitigate climate change through the sequestration and storage of carbon. These concepts were first introduced during the 2022 short session in SB 1534, and the bill sponsor met with stakeholders during the interim in an attempt to listen to concerns and improve the bill. Most of the work that was outlined in SB 1534 went forward in the absence of legislation through the efforts of the Oregon Global Warming Commission (OGWC).

Although SB 530 does show marked improvements from last session's version, the private landowner community still has several serious concerns about the contents of the bill, ***and urge opposition to the bill in its current form***. In particular:

SB 530 does not address the disproportionately low representation of landowner representatives on the OGWC's N&WL Stakeholder Advisory Committee. Further, the bill would make the current committee a statutory fixture. The bill sponsor has claimed that this bill is for the benefit of landowners. If this is the case, landowners and ag and forestry professionals must be allowed to develop the list of preferred climate mitigation and adaptation practices that will be granted imprimatur by the state rather than having a list of practices foisted on them by environmental advocates.

SB 530 gives the Oregon Global Warming Commission statutory authority to set statewide targets for increasing carbon sequestration and storage on N&WL. The OGWC set an aspirational goal in its N&WL proposal published in 2021. There were and remain major concerns regarding the feasibility of that goal and the reliability of the data supporting it. Setting a potentially unobtainable goal in statute is one step toward mandating outcomes rather than encouraging voluntary action.

SB 530 gives a nod to maintain long-term fiber supply, but does not recognize the importance of maintaining short and mid-term fiber supply. If fiber supply decreases in the short or mid-term because of practices adopted on private or public lands in the name of climate mitigation, it will not matter if long-term supply is preserved or improved. The infrastructure and needed workforce simply will not be in place to take advantage of it.

SB 530 does not recognize and promote climate benefits from the full scope of the closed-loop carbon cycle. The bill must not stop at the edge of the forest or field, but must recognize and promote practices that enhance the climate mitigation benefits across the full carbon cycle, including the benefits of utilizing forest-derived products in the built environment. Otherwise, the practices that will be promoted will fall short of achieving the climate benefits called for in the bill.

This limited scope is apparent, for example, in the definition of "natural climate solutions," which only focuses on carbon sequestration and storage on the landscape and reduction of direct emissions from management activities, rather than on the measurable benefits of using products derived from working lands in the place of higher-embodied carbon alternatives.

SB 530 is a step in the right direction, but additional work is needed for it to accomplish its lofty goals and meet the needs of landowners.



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