



2843 NW Lolo Drive, Ste. 200 | Bend, OR 97703

Phone (541) 647-2930

www.colw.org

February 14, 2023

Senate Committee On Natural Resources
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Testimony in support of SB 530

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Girod, and members of the committee,

Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is a conservation organization that, for more than 35 years, has protected Central Oregon’s forests and high desert, rivers and springs, fish and wildlife, and its vibrant communities. We work to conserve the region’s ecosystems, wildlife habitat, and working rural lands balanced with a responsible, sustainable approach to planning and fostering thriving communities.

Central Oregon LandWatch supports SB 530, which would establish policy, funding, and an administrative framework for promoting natural climate solutions on natural and working lands in Oregon.

Oregon’s statewide land use planning system, established by SB 100 in 1973, created a groundbreaking framework for the protection of rural farmlands, forests, and open spaces. We may not have known it then, but our land use system had an added benefit of also providing a layer of protection for the natural carbon storage and sequestration systems present on our rural lands. Today, however, the ravages of a warming climate are both taking their toll on our rural lands and rural economies, and threatening the continued storage and sequestration of carbon from natural and working lands. For example, in Central Oregon’s North Unit Irrigation District, several years of extreme drought coupled with an outdated and inefficient water rights distribution system have led to many farmers following fields. Due to development pressure, many agricultural lands in rural Deschutes County are proposed for conversion to luxury housing, which releases carbon from native soils and vegetation. SB 530’s proposed Agriculture Natural Climate Solutions Fund would provide the opportunity for incentives to help these and other agricultural landowners to establish cover crops or other activities that both support farmers and enhance the ability of working lands to sequester and store carbon. Supporting Oregon farmers with the funding and technology to improve soil carbon storage is a win-win solution for agricultural lands and the climate.

LandWatch applauds SB 530’s investments in rural lands and natural resources across the state to both support rural resource economies and use natural solutions to mitigate climate change.



WE DEFEND AND PLAN FOR CENTRAL OREGON'S LIVABLE FUTURE



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Respectfully submitted,

Rory Isbell
Staff Attorney & Rural Lands Program Manager
Central Oregon LandWatch

cc: Chief Sponsors Senator Dembrow, Representative Marsh, and Representative Neron



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