

**Written Testimony of the OCEN Forest Policy Subtable and Affiliated Organizations  
Submitted March 2, 2023**

**Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
Public Hearing: HB 5020  
Thursday, March 2, 2023  
1:00 pm**

Dear Co-Chairs Dembrow and Pham, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 5020. The organizations and individuals signed on to this letter strongly support Oregon's natural resource agencies taking a proactive and ambitious approach to confronting the climate crisis in Oregon — both through prioritizing carbon sequestration and addressing the climate impacts our state is already experiencing. Our organizations work to ensure the best possible outcomes for our forests, farms, climate, wildlife, water, and communities.

We are submitting this testimony to highlight a deficiency in the Governor's budget allocation for the Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) budget; namely, the Governor's final budget for ODF fails to allocate funding to increase ODF's scientific capacity. **While we urge you to support and pass HB 5020 as it contains necessary funding to further the Private Forest Accord, further the state forest HCP, and invest in wildfire risk management and resources, failure to include funding for policy option package (POP) 100 in HB 5020 is a missed opportunity to take strong climate action.**

Climate change is the most pressing issue of our time. Our state is already confronting severe impacts from climate change, including drought, heat waves, wildfires, flooding, and biodiversity loss. Further, Oregon's environmental justice and frontline communities bear the brunt of these impacts. Our natural resource agencies are uniquely positioned to confront these threats through natural climate solutions, which are capable of sequestering (i.e., capturing and storing) substantial amounts of carbon while also providing a multitude of co-benefits, such as clean drinking water, reduced heat island effects, improved air quality, flood control, enhanced soil health and productivity, wildfire resilience, community protection, and drought resilience. The state must take a comprehensive approach to addressing climate impacts while ensuring that future impacts are mitigated to the greatest extent possible. Despite ODF's claim that climate change is a considerable challenge to overcome, and highlighting its substantial impacts on all aspects of the agency's work, HB 5020 leaves out any explicit funding to address the climate crisis at an agency level.

Climate-smart forestry is an indispensable tool in Oregon’s fight against the worsening climate crisis. Climate-smart forestry integrates the challenges and opportunities of climate change mitigation and adaptation into forest policy, planning, and practices, aiming to optimize carbon storage and sequestration to account for worsening climate impacts.<sup>1</sup> Climate-smart forest management practices make Oregon’s forests invaluable carbon sinks, allowing our trees to be an asset in the fight against climate change. Additionally, these practices have local benefits, including supporting biodiversity, improving water quality and quantity, improving fire resilience, and increasing public health and economic equity.<sup>2</sup> Ensuring that these practices are successfully integrated into ODF’s work is a crucial component of climate action in Oregon.

POP 100 would have added nine permanent positions to ODF to increase science and planning capacity and improve the agency’s ability to integrate climate-smart forest management practices. Adding this capacity to increase science-based, climate-smart forestry practices was an opportunity to improve Oregon’s public forest management strategies and help ODF meet the climate goals adopted in the Climate Change and Carbon Plan (CCCP). Further, adding capacity would be a crucial step in helping the agency meet its longer-term mandates required within Executive Order 20-04. During POP development, the agency also clarified that these positions would help ODF expand its capacity for meaningful community engagement and increase engagement with historically marginalized and traditionally underrepresented communities. Not only was this POP necessary for increasing ODF’s long-term scientific capacity, but it would also be a step forward in bettering the agency’s equity practices.

Failing to include funding for POP 100 and explicitly allocate general funding for added scientific capacity to ODF is a missed opportunity. While it is necessary to allocate funding for wildfire response, Private Forest Accord development, and the state forest HCP, funding to build up ODF’s permanent, scientific capacity is a necessary piece for solving the climate puzzle.

Now is the time to take bold climate action. ODF should be a model for other states to follow on how to best use our forests as a critical, natural climate solution by supporting carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and clean water. **We request that POP 100 be added back into the HB 5020 so that ODF may be better positioned to take bold climate action.** If there is no opportunity to provide funding for climate change and add scientific capacity to ODF, we hope at

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Charisse Sydoriak, *Adapting to Climate Change: An Introduction to the Climate-Smart Conservation Approach*, SOCAN, <https://socan.eco/climate-smart/>; see also Stein, B.A., P. Glick, N. Edelson, and A. Staudt (eds.), *Climate-Smart Conservation: Putting Adaptation Principles into Practice* (2014), Nat’l Wildlife Fed., [https://www.nwf.org/~media/PDFs/Global-Warming/Climate-Smart-Conservation/NWF-Climate-Smart-Conservation\\_5-08-14.pdf](https://www.nwf.org/~media/PDFs/Global-Warming/Climate-Smart-Conservation/NWF-Climate-Smart-Conservation_5-08-14.pdf) (last accessed Sept. 29, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> See generally Seng, J.U. (2021), *Climate Policy Solutions for Oregon’s Private Forests*, Portland: Oregon Wild, <https://oregonwild.org/sites/default/files/1-Uploads/Blogs/Interns/CLIMATE%20PRIVATE%20FORESTS%20-%20FINAL.pdf> (last accessed Sept. 29, 2022) (discussing the numerous co-benefits of climate-smart forest practices on private lands).

minimum that ODF would be open to internally shifting funding dollars to allow for some work to be done to better prioritize climate-smart forestry.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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