



The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a 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.

March 2, 2023

To: **Co-Chairs Dembrow and Pham and Members of the Committee**
[Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources](#)

Re **[HB 5020](#) Oregon Dept. of Forestry Budget - Comments**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon adopted new positions on Forests in 2021, including *“That 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.”*

We also have strong positions on addressing climate change and we support the state’s Land Use Goal 4, Forest Lands, and understand that our private industrial forests are among the most productive in the nation. Like our manufacturing and our agricultural industrial lands, our private forest industrial lands must be preserved and protected. **We also support Goal 5 to protect natural resources and are pleased that the Private Forest Accord was signed** and is now being implemented to increase riparian stream buffers while keeping private forests viable into the future. That is why **we also support the multiple Habitat Conservation Planning efforts for Oregon’s forests.** We had hoped that we would also see forest practices that recognize our changing climate. We appreciate the value that our private and public forests provide for both wildlife habitat and as the source of most Oregonians’ drinking water and have supported bills this session to address this issue.

We remind the committee of the Department of Forestry’s mission: *“To serve the people of Oregon by protecting, managing, and promoting stewardship of Oregon’s forests to enhance environmental, economic, and community sustainability.”*

2021 and 2022 were good years for the Dept. of Forestry budget. We were pleased that the previous legislature recognized the problems posed by the agency’s reliance on an “all-hands-on-deck” approach that, with increased fire seasons—both in duration and intensity—meant that the day-to-day work of the agency other than firefighting was neglected. **We cannot afford to go backwards on those victories.** If the budget allows, we hope to see a continuation of the work done under SB 762 (2021). This committee has heard how important it is to reduce fuel loads.

We were pleased to hear from Board of Forestry Chair Jim Kelly and State Forestry Cal Mukumoto that **climate change is now recognized as one of the biggest issues facing this agency.** We have been supportive of the reorganization and creation of a Planning Division and were disappointed that the Governor did not include the Agency Request: **Community Engagement and Climate Change (POP 100)** in her budget. Even if Oregon’s budget cannot fund all of this budget request, we need to continue the work the agency has begun.

The scientists in this package are critical to on-going work on managing Oregon's forests with climate change in mind. Additionally, the League would like to suggest that a new KPM may be needed to measure CO2 reduction as a result of the agency's forest management. This new KPM would indicate where this agency is helping to meet the state's 2030 climate goal.

We also were disappointed that **POP 104, Planning Branch Capacity**, was not included. Again, we cannot just fight fires; **we need to plan to increase resiliency in forests to keep wildfire damage in check.** We also need to be sure the agency has the staff needed to do the day-to-day work to accomplish their core mission.

In 2021, we provided the following related to **KPM #4: Urban and Community Forest Management: *This target has not been met since 2016...*** *KPM #4 depends on federal funding ONLY at ODF. With climate change, our urban centers are seeing "heat islands", an issue that LWVOR has pointed out as of critical concern when the state housing rules from HB 2001 (2019) were adopted. (A recent [study](#) demonstrated the link between formerly redlined neighborhoods and excessive heat due to insufficient tree canopy.) As we densify, we need to be sure we continue to have trees and greenery to absorb carbon and help reduce the effects of rising temperatures in our urban areas.* We note that **KPM #4 numbers have sadly decreased.** The committee might consider adding some state funds to address this important public health issue. (Thank you, Rep. Pham, for your comments on this issue.) The Governor's housing targets in the new [HB 2001-11](#), which LWVOR supports, also mean that **the legislature needs to be sure cities address the need for more tree canopy—to fill in where it is missing today and as part of new infrastructure.** We were pleased to hear that Rep. Pham has a bill this session to request state assistance.

Separately, League volunteers are working with others on SB 530, the Natural Climate Solutions bill, and we appreciate Sen. Dembrow's guidance on that effort. The League is also hopeful that the Oregon Global Warming Commission will get a new name, clarity of charge and funded staff to continue their work.

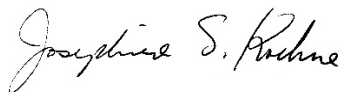
It is important with this agency's work, as with others, that we take advantage of **federal funds** if they provide benefit for Oregonians. **Match dollars always need a cost/benefit analysis.**

We would be remiss if we did not **recognize the work of this agency with MGO**, the CPA firm. Hearing Forester Mukumoto say he's paying attention to cash flow was refreshing. And we know that's true. **The League believes the reorganization of the agency and the changes in accounting have been incredible improvements.** We are appreciative that the legislature provided the \$50 million so that the agency could continue its daily responsibilities while awaiting reimbursements. We also want to recognize that the Board of Forestry has also been taking a more active leadership role in overseeing ODF management which the League appreciates.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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