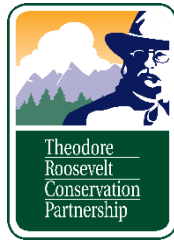


The Nature Conservancy



March 31, 2023

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Testimony in favor of HB 3181-1

Submitted by Laura Tabor on behalf of The Nature Conservancy; Michael O'Casey, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership; Mark Salvo, Oregon Natural Desert Association; Amy Patrick, Oregon Hunters Association; Ian Isaacson, Oregon Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers; Joseph Vaile, Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 3181-1.

Our organizations work with communities around the state, manage lands and waters in varied ecosystems, and collaborate on challenging environmental and conservation issues across Oregon. We recognize addressing climate change is a critical part of advancing conservation and are committed to helping reach Oregon's clean energy and climate goals with least impact to the environment and communities. We see HB 3181-1 as an important step toward accelerating Oregon's clean energy transition while accommodating other important land uses and values.

Energy planning that accommodates land use and natural processes can dramatically reduce impacts to wildlife and natural areas at minimal additional cost. Recent research by The Nature Conservancy analyzed many possible scenarios for achieving clean energy and climate goals across the West. The [Power of Place – West study](#) found that Western states can affordably and reliably meet all their future energy needs, achieve economy-wide net-zero greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2050, and avoid the loss of their most sensitive natural areas and working lands.

Better siting can protect nearly 50% more natural areas and working lands than if we pursue current energy development practices, but it won't happen automatically. If we are to responsibly increase the pace of clean energy development, the West will need to build new clean energy between four to eight times faster than we do today by 2050. This makes it essential to bring all interests to the table early to identify how to do this with the least impact and most benefit to the wide range of communities, ecosystems, and economies potentially affected.

We have welcomed the opportunity to engage in multiple siting conversations in recent years, with many of our organizations contributing to the Oregon Renewable Energy Siting Assessment report and

tool development, the Oregon Smart Siting Collaborative, and most recently, the broad siting policy table convened over the past eight months. These efforts have spurred conversation and learning and highlighted areas for continued focus. HB 3181-1 would build upon the progress made by the siting policy table and provide direction and support to generate actionable and mutually beneficial solutions in this complex space.

HB 3181 –1 would support Oregonians to explore important issues such as:

- **Ways to permit more efficiently without sacrificing rigor in siting decision making.** This could include identifying the characteristics of least conflict areas, options to spur development in those places, and more upfront mitigation planning to alleviate uncertainty and provide streamlined options for projects where appropriate.
- **How to maximize benefit and minimize need for and impact of new transmission.** In coordination with the state energy strategy proposed in HB 2534-1, it will be critical to coordinate how to make the most of existing transmission through reconductoring and co-location of transmission lines, and ensure new transmission doesn't draw energy development into sensitive areas.
- **How to support and integrate local planning and bring value to communities, while meeting statewide land use goals.** County governments play an important role in energy siting and need resources to bring local perspective to state processes, while implementing policy that balances local priorities with state goals.
- **Coordination of state renewable energy siting with federal processes.** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is in the scoping phase of a new Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement to update Solar Energy Zones on public lands in western states. BLM's scoping in combination with the process initiated by HB 3181-1 will have the opportunity to coordinate in identifying and promoting development in low-conflict areas on different types of land.

We recognize there are other policy options that could accelerate renewable energy development immediately. A well-designed, short-term relief valve could complement HB 3181-1 by creating enough breathing room to “go slow to go fast” in the long run, but can't be a replacement for a balanced approach to meeting state energy goals with the least impact and the most benefit to multiple interests.

We strongly urge your support of HB 3181 by adopting the -1 amendment and moving this bill forward.