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

Testimony in favor of HB 3181-1

Submitted by Laura Tabor, Climate Action Director

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3181 with the -1 amendment.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a non-partisan, science-based organization that works in communities across the state, manages lands and waters in varied ecosystems, and partners with ranchers, farmers, fishers, timber, and environmental interests on some of the most challenging conservation issues facing people and nature. As a conservation organization, TNC is committed to fighting both climate change and biodiversity loss to create a future where people and nature thrive. We want to help the state meet its 100% clean energy goals with least impact to nature and communities and have welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the siting policy table as a participant and supporting facilitation over the past few months to make progress towards this goal.

TNC's recent [Power of Place – West](#) study analyzed regional conservation and energy data and found that it's possible to meet clean energy goals while protecting the most sensitive natural and working lands and waters. But this hopeful finding isn't guaranteed: across the west, better siting can preserve nearly 50% more natural and working lands than if we follow today's energy development practices.

Getting siting right is a hard but important conversation to have given the many perspectives to balance. With clean energy targets in place and interest growing, now is the time to formalize this conversation and build on the progress the siting policy table has made. HB 3181-1 would provide direction and support to generate actionable and mutually beneficial solutions in this complex space. It would explore:

- ways to permit more efficiently without losing rigor, like identifying the characteristics of least conflict areas and doing more mitigation planning up front; and
- how to support and integrate local planning.

We recognize there are other policy options that could accelerate RE development immediately. A well-designed, short-term relief valve could complement HB 3181 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.

TNC is pleased to testify in support of HB 3181 with the -1 amendments and urges the committee's support to advance this important work.