

February 3, 2025

I am writing to support Oregon house bill HB3173. Establishes the OregonFlora Program at Oregon State University. This bill will establish OregonFlora in statute and initiate a sustainable funding stream of \$400K per biennium to maintain a dynamic dataset about Oregon's plants.

I would like to share some personal history with the project, and express my support for the bill.

I am a life-long Oregonian. I became interested in botany while attending Lane Community College and the University of Oregon. I then went on to a thirty-five-year career as a professional botanist with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). I am now retired and am confident that my reliance on the OregonFlora project is typical for federal government botanists (and likely many other professional and amateur botanists).

When I was in college in the early 1980's in Eugene, there was an annual meeting where both professional and amateur botanists gathered to share their latest knowledge on the locations and conditions and threats to rare plants around the state. This was the first networking and documentation of rare plants around the state. This was all before personal computers.

In the 1990's I remember the beginning of the Oregon Flora project. People around the state were assigned "blocks" of areas to try to collect species lists of the plants in each area. Over the next 30 years I have followed the development of a comprehensive on-line resource for photos, range maps, herbarium specimens, and gardening information. They have also published two books providing technical information (including the latest names) and drawings for all plants in the state. I am eagerly awaiting the final volume of the series. This project has evolved and taken full advantage of the emergence of computerized databases and internet access for all.

For my work with the federal government, I routinely used the OregonFlora interface to get the latest plant names, habitat information, and range maps. I recently helped review and provide information for rare plants for the Blue Mountains (Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman) National Forest plan revisions. OregonFlora provided critical information that will be used to help forest managers determine how to better manage national forests. Another important user is invasive plant managers. Current information is essential to help control weeds across the state.

Much of the OregonFlora work has been done by volunteers and students. In addition, citizen scientists from around the state have provided photos, herbarium specimens, species lists, and other input. However, there are many administrative, data management, project planning, and public coordination jobs that require paid staff. The project relies heavily on donations and grants. It must be difficult to plan and staff such a complex project with uncertainty about funding. In the past, the Oregon and Washington offices of the BLM and U.S. Forest Service have contributed substantial financial support.

**Given the current assault on federal employees and science, your support for this resource is even more critical. It is highly likely that future Federal support will not be available.**

**Please pass HB3173 to support the OregonFlora project. The plants and I thank you.**

*Paula J. Brooks*