

Submitter: Cara Kildall

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5039

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and Levy and members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee:

I'm writing to express my strong support for \$5M in OWEB's budget for renewal of the Natural and Working Lands Fund, which provides incentives and technical support to help landowners, land managers, environmental justice communities, and Tribes adopt practices that support natural climate solutions on Oregon's natural and working lands.

Climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration and storage is only one benefit of sustainable land management, habitat conservation, and restoration. Other benefits include managing wildfire risk, improved water filtration and storage, cooler water temperatures, maintaining biodiversity, providing pollinator habitat, soil health, reducing flood damage, and more. As the climate changes, these benefits help increase Oregon's overall resilience to climate disturbances and severe events like wildfire, floods, and heat domes.

Decades of environmental science research findings support conservation and restoration of our native habitats. We know that intact ecosystems are much more effective at climate change mitigation than restoration, and restored ecosystems are more effective than degraded or converted lands. Technological attempts at climate change mitigation are nowhere near as efficient or effective as natural solutions, and our planet's systems are the best chance we have to maintain human and ecosystem health. Natural solutions are also a better economic choice. The value of ecosystem services cannot be understated, and we are continually finding that we save money long-term by preserving and maintaining our environment rather than restoring or doing damage control.

Utilizing long-term thinking over short-term profits is the only correct choice. When we prioritize short-term profits we end up degrading habitats and depleting natural resources, which ends up costing more in both financial and human health/social terms.

We already have the programs and networks to take action. The Fund is 1-year old and is doing great work, but sustained support creates momentum that moves the work from a start-up phase to an established effort that can start reaping returns on the initial investment. Continuity of funding is also important. When funding is

inconsistent, stakeholder investment in programs decrease, and it becomes difficult for land managers and community organizations to anticipate what will be available and how to take advantage of it effectively. Time and effort have already been invested by agency staff. This coordination of material and human resources will become more efficient in community outreach, stakeholder engagement, and implementation of goals.

Natural climate solutions take time to establish and will cost more to build in the future. The sooner natural climate solutions are implemented, the more they can help lessen the magnitude of disturbance events and potentially reduce future damages and costs.

Please do the right thing.

I urge your support for the inclusion of the \$5M investment of the NWL Fund in OWEB's budget for the 2025-2027 biennium. Thank you!

Thank you,
Cara Kildall, Botanist and Research Forestry Technician
Member of Cascadia Wildlands and MCAT