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February 27<sup>th</sup> 2025

Testimony supporting House Bill 5039.

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Levy and members of the Joint Ways and Means subcommittee on Natural Resources

Southern Oregon Climate Action Now (SOCAN) is a grassroots climate organization of some 2,000 Southern Oregonians. We are concerned about the climate crisis and seek federal, state and local action to address it. We are rural and coastal Southern Oregonians who live on the frontlines of the warming, reducing snowpack, heatwaves, drought, rising sea level and the increasing wildfire risk that these trends conspire to impose on us. Because of our concern, we pay close attention to efforts nationally, statewide, and locally that impact our collective efforts to address the climate crisis. As our logo above indicates, the focus of SOCAN is to promote action through science.

We are writing on behalf of SOCAN to express our strong support for HB5039 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. The removal of atmospheric carbon dioxide with its deposition into soils is generally known as natural climate solutions on working lands. This process of adding carbon into the soils is known as atmospheric carbon sequestration. This is a well-demonstrated international process to remove carbon from the atmosphere and thus lower the severity of impacts from future climate change impacts while improving soil health and sustainability. The processes are referred to as regenerative agriculture.

Ray comes with this recommendation as a member of the Advisory Panel of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now in the arena of carbon sequestration on working lands with many years of lecturing to the public and to student members of a Southern Oregon University and a SOCAN Course on the topic of climate change in natural and working land practices. Ray is also a former professor of Microbiology at Oregon State University and a retired senior environmental research scientist with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Alan was co-founder of

SOCAN in 2013 and has served as cofacilitator since. Alan, meanwhile, has 30 years of experience teaching biology and environmental Science at Southeast Missouri State University

Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) to the climate crisis are “deliberate human actions (NCS pathways) that protect, restore, and improve management of forests, wetlands, grasslands, oceans, and agricultural lands to mitigate climate change<sup>4</sup>. NCS were also defined as having no net negative impact on food and fiber supply and no net harm to biodiversity, while ensuring actions are implemented in socially and culturally responsible ways” (Ellis et al. 2024).

Meanwhile NCSA (undated) states: “Natural climate solutions (NCS), include actions that protect healthy ecosystem, improve the management of working lands, and restore all types of land and coastal ecosystem; they can provide around 30% of the emissions reductions needed to limit global warming to 1.5°C by 2030.

In our state, the Oregon Climate Action Commission, then the Oregon Global Warming Commission (OCAC 2023) stated “In 2021, the commission adopted a Natural and Working Lands proposal that set goals for carbon capture and storage on Oregon's natural and working lands: Sequester at least an additional 5 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year in Oregon’s natural and working lands and waters by 2030, and at least 9.5 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year by 2050 relative to a 2010 to 2019 baseline.” This comprises the state’s effort to harness natural climate solutions contributing to the state’s effort to undertake our share to addressing the global climate crisis.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC 2025) made the critical points that in addition to addressing the climate crisis, natural climate solutions support biodiversity, make communities more resilient, promote clean air and water, and help economies thrive.

In Oregon, Natural Climate Solutions projects in our natural and working lands are funded through an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board incentive fund (Oregon 2025).

Funding from this Bill would serve several purposes and benefits. First, it is a means to become technically competitive to secure Federal dollars to help support technical assistance to landowners to learn and apply nature-based climate actions and farm practices that can help to combat the effects of climate change through removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through plant and farm practice activities, and by depositing some of the carbon into working land soils. Carbon tracking activities in Oregon’s working lands are crucial for this feeds into the national and international efforts to learn how much global carbon is being sequestered, where in the states various amounts are sequestered, and to hold such things as field events to teach other landowners how to benefit from sustainable land management practices that reduce fuel and fertilizer costs and have the potential to increase farm incomes.

This working fund is one year old. But sustained support creates the needed momentum that moves the work further into larger masses of land. So, continuity of funding is important and also better positions Oregon to be competitive as federal dollars become available through the USDA and other means. Thus, this bill should be funded for the biennium and should be

increased in amount over time. There also may be some federal dollars at some point available to augment this program.

Given our commitment to encouraging meaningful climate action in our state, it is hardly surprising that Southern Oregon Climate Action Now endorses HB 5039 which appropriates "to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, out of the General Fund, the following amounts, for the following purposes: (1) Operations..... \$ 1,967,700 (2) Grants ..... \$ 7,000,000" (OLIS 2025). HB5039 thus seeks the continuation of funding for OWEB during the coming biennium

Respectfully Submitted



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OLIS 2025 2025 Regular Session HB 5039 Oregon Legislative Information System

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Measures/Overview/HB5039>

Oregon 2025 Grant Programs Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board: Natural and Working Lands Grant Offerings. <https://www.oregon.gov/oweb/grants/Pages/NWL.aspx>

TNC 2025 Perspectives: Natural Climate Solutions - Embracing Nature, Empowering the Planet.

The Nature Conservancy <https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-insights/perspectives/natural-climate-solutions/>