

Submitter: Theodora Jaster
On Behalf Of: HB3173 OregonFlora
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Esteemed Joint Ways & Means Committee,
I hereby express my whole-hearted support for HB 3173. As botanist in south central Oregon I had to use a variety of plant identification manuals to do my job and none of them had a full set of the species of that region. For this reason, it was very inefficient and actually impossible to make a reliable identification of many of the species. I wished there were a comprehensive plant identification manual ("Flora") that would include even the remote regions of our state.

Soon thereafter I discovered there was an independently funded team at Oregon State University working on just that. Finally, the first two volumes of this manual, Flora of Oregon, have been published. The third volume is still underway. In the meantime, a robust interactive website has been developed by OregonFlora, powered in large part by the information gathered to prepare Flora of Oregon.

Now I can use the distribution maps, field photos, and identification tools on a regular basis and have come to rely on them. It's fun and engaging, but even more importantly the information is vetted, accurate, and reliable. This is the only resource (including the volumes) that offers this kind of comprehensive information for the whole state.

The program has been funded over the years by small grants and by the ongoing individual support of hundreds of Oregonians, but funding is often on the brink of faltering. Businesses, agencies, educators, and private citizens now rely on these tools. The volumes are publicly available and the website is free! Last year the organization was on the brink of being shuttered. So many stakeholders were very concerned that the final volume would not get finished and that the website, which requires ongoing stewardship to stay relevant, would no longer be available or maintained.

OregonFlora provides an engaging and inviting portal for anyone to learn about our state's natural heritage. Many agencies and businesses involved with natural resources rely on the information from the books and website as a central tool for their projects and daily needs.

If the state can provide a stable funding source for the core needs of this program, thereby leveraging 31 years of research and database development, then the economy, efficiency, and accuracy of information used across multiple Oregon agencies, businesses, and educators improves considerably by their ability to easily

access and share existing comprehensive and accurate information.